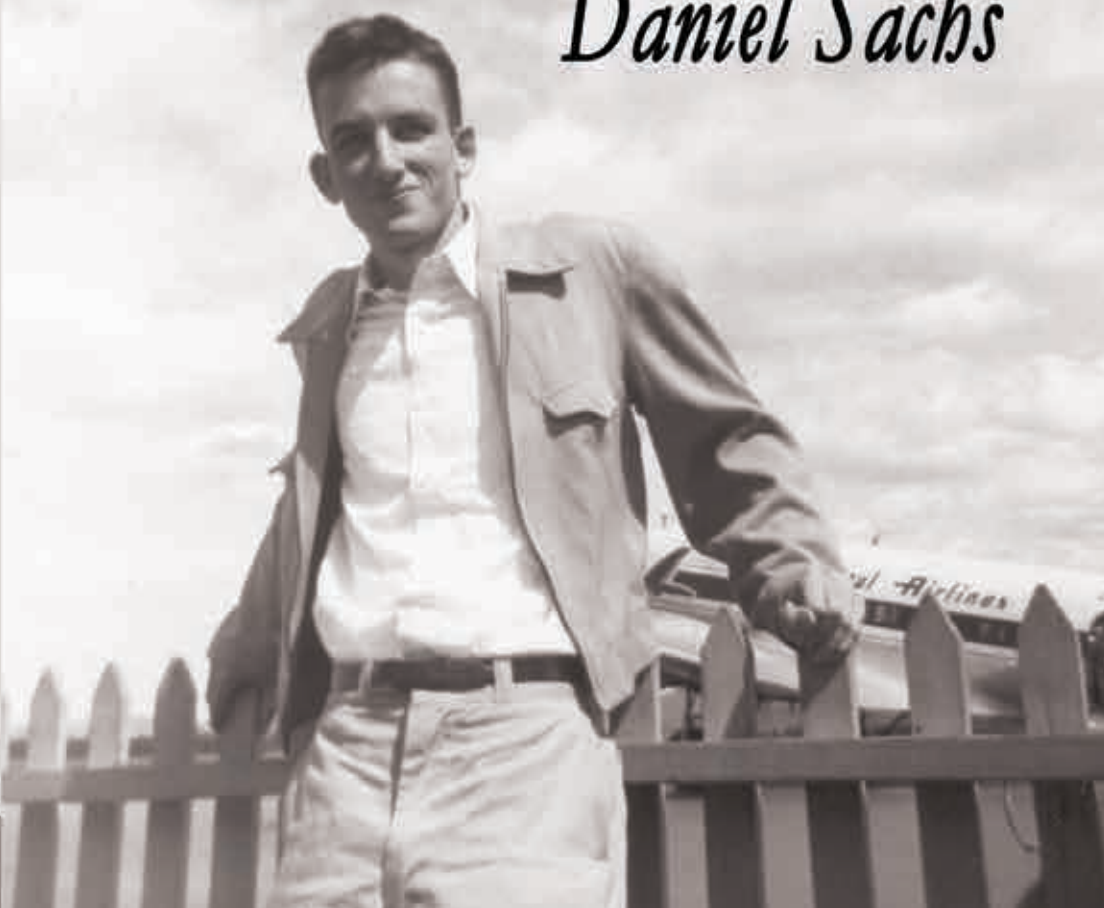


# Through Turmoil to Tranquility

*Daniel Sachs*





# THROUGH TURMOIL TO TRANQUILITY

Daniel Sachs

*Through Turmoil to Tranquility*

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(Revised for this second edition)

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I am grateful to my own family, who, when I first broached the idea of writing this book, supported the project without reservations. I benefited throughout from the thoughtful questions and comments of my wife, Ruth, who was able to bring to the project the perspective of readers in future generations. My son, Noah, edited the manuscript conscientiously for both style and content. My daughter, Julia Loeb, and my son, George, willingly devoted their time to helping me work through the intricacies of the word-processing and photo-editing programs that are essential to a self-published book. My brother, Benjamin, helped to jog my memory of events that took place during the childhood we shared and to fill in what would otherwise have been an incomplete picture. He was also kind enough to point out some inaccuracies in the first edition of this book; hopefully, I have corrected them for this edition. My friends, Joanne and Bill Rees, commented positively on drafts of some of the chapters that I circulated to them, thereby giving me the further encouragement that I needed to move forward. Most of all, I deeply appreciate Ruthie's patience and her willingness to give me the "space" I needed to get this book written and to get it ready for publication.

For filling in many details about their own lives and the lives of their contemporaries, I owe my deepest thanks, as well, to my aunt, Gabrielle Forrest, my father's sister, who passed away in 2008, and to my mother's sister, Stefanie Lewy, still alive and thriving at age 97. She is now the only survivor of the generation that preceded mine.

I cannot say enough in praise of my paternal grandparents, Irene and Curt Sachs, and my mother, Leonie Sachs, who, by saving hundreds of letters and documents, provided me, and their descendants for generations to come, with a treasure trove of original source materials. More important, they imbued in me at an early age a pride in family, a sense of the importance of the past as heritage, and what I refer to in the book as the family's core myths. In an important sense, it was to keep those myths alive that this book was written.

Finally, I wish to thank my "brothers" at Mankind Project, Inc. (MKP). The insights I have gained through my personal work at MKP, since becoming a member in 2007, have aided me immeasurably in the writing of this second edition.

Despite those invaluable contributions from others, the responsibility for this book is entirely mine. If my memory for certain details is fuzzy, if my recollections, clouded by the passing years, are inaccurate, if my "take" on certain events is off the mark, I beg pardon of the reader and of those who make appearances in these pages. I have written down my memories as I retain them. If they are distorted, I can only repeat what so many other writers in my position have said: these are, after all, memoirs, that is to say, memories, inevitably skewed by time and perspective.

Daniel Sachs  
Bethesda, Maryland  
January 15, 2014



*Isaak Fröhlich, a paternal great-great-grandfather, 1795-1867.*

## FOREWORD

*Remember the days of old,  
consider the years of ages past;  
ask your father, he will inform you;  
your elders, they will tell you.*

*Deuteronomy 32:1-2*

Wearing a dark frock coat, a dark silk cravat around his neck, my great-great-grandfather Isaak Fröhlich sits stiffly in the photographer's studio in his hometown, Oels,<sup>1</sup> in 1864. His deep-set gray-green eyes and gaunt hollow cheeks give him the fragile appearance of someone whose earthly travails are soon to end, as indeed they would, three years later. He glowers at the photographer, perhaps resenting the time it has taken the man to set up the pose and to duck under the curtain behind the camera. His expression says, "I didn't want to do this in the first place. Can't we get it over with?" Or, perhaps, he feels nothing of the sort; maybe this is simply the dignified, proper, everyday cast of his face. We will never know.

Indeed, we know altogether so little of this man. He was born in 1795, in Hundsfield, a town on the outskirts of Breslau, now incorporated in that city.<sup>2</sup> Another seventy-five years would pass before the united Germany would be born under Chancellor Otto Bismarck, with all that that was to signify for the world in the century to follow. At Isaak Fröhlich's birth, the United States, on the other side of the Atlantic, was still in swaddling clothes. George Washington was president and most of America's Founding Fathers were still alive.

His life in Oels was interrupted in 1814 when he was called into active duty in the Prussian Army and took up arms against

Napoleon and the French in what the Germans call their War of Independence. Having enlisted in the *Schlesische Landwehr* (akin to our National Guard), he may have seen service as an 18-year-old at the decisive Battle of Leipzig, at which, in 1813, the armies of the Grand Coalition defeated Napoleon's armies. The medals we see on his chest in the photograph attest to his bravery in that war. Clearly he is proud of those decorations, because he has chosen to wear them for his formal portrait even though some fifty years have passed since he received them. Indeed, for Isaak Fröhlich, these medals were a badge of honor, the proof that he and other German Jews had paid their dues for emancipation from their earlier status as second-class citizens.<sup>3</sup> Until they were called on to help in repelling the Napoleonic invasion, Jews had not been allowed to serve in the armies of the German states.<sup>4</sup>

Fröhlich's military experience must have marked him for life. From a story passed down in the Sachs family we learn that, when speaking of someone whom he disliked or who angered him, he would burst out with "*Nur vor die haubitzen!*" ("Stand him up in front of the howitzers!").

At 45, when some men are already grandfathers, Isaak Fröhlich became a father. A daughter, Anna, was born to him and to his wife. Anna would grow up to marry my great-grandfather, Louis Sachs, and in 1881 give birth to my paternal grandfather, Curt Sachs. Isaak Fröhlich died in Hundsfield in 1867.

This is all we know of Isaak Fröhlich. Of his education, his early upbringing, his career, his loves, his passions, his disappointments, the warp and woof of the fabric that distinguishes one man's life from another's, we know nothing.

But then, how much do any of us know of our great-great-grandparents? If we know their names, we consider ourselves fortunate, feeling secure in our genealogy. But, even then, our great-great-grandparents are no more than that, names in rectangular boxes in the family tree, sixteen of them for that generation. In most instances, the boxes are blank. We do not even know most of our great-great-grandparents' names, let alone the particulars of their births, hometowns and deaths. I know the names of the eight great-great-grandparents on my father's side, and none of that generation on my mother's side. My ignorance of their lives is a primary reason for writing these memoirs: I wish to leave to my

great-great-grandchildren a better record of my life and times than I have of Isaak's and of others of his generation.

In writing these memoirs, I join the thousands of others, the famous, the not-so-famous and the unknowns, in the burgeoning genre of memoir-writing, some intended for mass-market publication, some for deposit in university libraries, some primarily as a legacy to grandchildren and family. Mine belongs with the last of these.

Regardless of their intended audience, memoirs are written with many ends in view. The earliest memoirs describe the author's progress from error to truth and from sin to moral enlightenment, the leading examples of these being St. Augustine's *Confessions* and John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*.<sup>5</sup> My memoirs are certainly not of this sort. After eight decades of life on this earth, I am neither fully enlightened morally nor free from error. Who among us can claim otherwise?

Nor is there in this book any description of a life-changing encounter, a transformative epiphany that causes a 180-degree turn in life, of the kind said to have been experienced by Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus. In my life, as in others', there have been occasional dramatic changes, but far more frequent are the small-caliber incremental learning experiences that, taken together, make the whole man. "Experience transforms us," one writer has said, "but you must gauge these transformations in tiny measurements."<sup>6</sup>

Nor do I write as I might have had I spent a lifetime in the public eye. Had I been a statesman, or a corporate leader or a general, I might have written my memoirs for purposes of self-justification, to explain and defend the actions taken while in public life. If I were such a man, I might tell the story of how I bestrode the world's stage and gained triumph after triumph, ignoring the slings and arrows of my enemies and those who felt that I wasn't up to the demands of my eminent position. If I were writing after having been toppled from my lofty throne, I might describe my fall and blame it entirely on those who conspired to pull me down. But no, this style of memoir is not mine, because I have not had even the fifteen minutes of fame that the painter Andy Warhol said were every man's due, and therefore have neither the need nor the opportunity to write memoirs of this sort. Nor again, do I write these memoirs for self-glorification, as a Hollywood personality

might, describing theatrical or cinematic triumphs and dropping the names of the famous and nearly-famous encountered along the way.

Nor, finally, do these memoirs belong to the genre that has become so popular over the last few years: the author as victim and survivor, what one writer<sup>7</sup> has called the “nobody memoir” written by what she calls “New-Wave navel-gazers.” Such a memoir, the critic Michael Dirda has written with tongue in cheek,

*requires that its hero or heroine be born into a bad family. Drunken mothers, brutal fathers. Drugged-out sisters, predatory uncles—such is the grim stock company of the modern reverie over childhood and youth.*<sup>8</sup>

A memoir written in this vein would have told of how I began life as a victim, how fate dealt me a bad hand, whether through poverty, lack of education or disability— physical, intellectual or moral—and how, through discipline and tenacious willpower, I ultimately triumphed over such adversity. But the actors in Dirda’s grim stock company are not part of my life drama, and that story of triumph over adversity is someone else’s, not mine.

Closer to the mark is another sub-genre of memoirs: those written by Holocaust survivors, describing first the wartime horror that they lived through and then the effect of that experience on their lives since then. These are the stories of the camps or of toiling at great personal risk as slave labor in German-owned factories, or of life in the forests with the Partisans, or of receiving shelter from righteous gentiles. These are not my stories. I was not in the camps, or in hiding, and neither were my parents. And yet, as I will show, the Second World War and the Holocaust directed against the Jews cast a long shadow over my early childhood. Indeed, as one child of Holocaust survivors has written, “The most important event in my life happened before I was born.” My parents were twice refugees. Driven out of Germany by the lengthening shadow of Nazism, they thought to find a haven and professional advancement in Madrid, only to be driven first out of Madrid and soon thereafter out of Spain altogether by the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. These moves from one country to another, and the tension and deprivation that accompanied them, must have left their mark on my psyche, even at that early age.

My motive in writing these memoirs is none of these. Having become aware of my ignorance of Isaak Fröhlich and other ancestors, I wanted my progeny to know more about their father,

grandfather, great-grandfather and, yes, great-great-grandfather. I wanted to lay bare to myself and to them who I am and where I came from. This book, then, is for grandchildren Talia, Jonah, Ezra, Adam and Claudia, and for descendants as yet unborn, including, God willing, that infant, six generations hence, who may first see the light of day in the year 2233, a span of time as far off into the future as the date of Isaak Fröhlich's birth, 1795, is distant in the past from the present year, 2014. I write this book as well for friends and strangers curious to know the story it tells.

Thinking on the one hand of my grandchildren and those who come after, and on the other hand of Isaak Fröhlich and other forebears, I see the overlapping generations as waves pounding against the shore. As one wave breaks, another is already gathering momentum and will break in its turn, with others forming behind that one, awaiting theirs, as they have since time immemorial. My paternal grandfather, Curt Sachs, occupied a large space in my life until he died in 1959, when I was 25. His widow, my grandmother, played an even larger role in my life. She lived on until 1985, dying at the age of 96. I was 51 at the time. My granddaughter, Talia Loeb, although five generations removed from my grandparents, was born only ten years after my grandmother's death.

My grandparents, so much a part of my life as I was growing up, are the great-great-grandparents of Talia, Jonah, Ezra, Adam and Claudia and others of that generation as yet unborn. They are as remote in the family tree from my grandchildren as Isaak Fröhlich is from me. My grandchildren's grandchildren will be as remote from me as I am from my great-great-grandparents, born in the first decades of the 19th century. Will those grandchildren be as curious about me and the times I lived in as I am about my forebears? If so, I hope that these memoirs will illuminate my life and times.

That same motivation prompted a pioneer Texan, George Washington Davis, born in 1797 and thus a contemporary of Isaak Fröhlich but a world apart, to set down his reminiscences:

*The thought has lately arose in my mind that someday, if not now, you would like to know something more than you do of my history and to hear an account of your ancestors and relations or from whence you or the origin of your family and with whom you are connected. If, however, these details should prove uninteresting to you I will not lose my labor, the employment which the task gives me will be some amusement and occupation in my present cheerful loneliness. So, I shall not regret my labors. Since I have come*

*to more mature years and indulged in more reflection I have often regretted that the thoughtlessness of youth had prevented me from making many inquiries on the subjects of my parents when they were alive and when I was with them. If you have the same curiosity and inquiring spirit you will feel much more at a loss than I have and have more trouble, for my advantages and opportunities have been much greater than yours.*<sup>9</sup>

To carry out what I saw as an obligation to my children and grandchildren, I set out to write the non-fiction equivalent of a *bildungsroman*, a growing-up novel, showing how a Jewish boy, the son and grandson of immigrants, living in a specifically Jewish setting, emerged from that constricted environment, of the doors that were opened to him, and of the turbulent first three decades of his life.

The book is also intended for my contemporaries. Having promised his readers that he would “describe myself as I am,” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, perhaps the most famous memoirist of them all, goes on to say: “*To know me in my riper years, it is necessary to have known me well in my youth.*”<sup>10</sup>

My hope is that those who are passing through this life with me will come away with a smile of recognition, saying “Yes, that’s how it was!” or, at one remove, “Yes, that’s how it must have been,” or “This explains perhaps, certain failings and deficiencies in him” (along with, possibly and hopefully, certain strengths as well). Along the way, by describing my interests and enthusiasms, the *mise en scene* or setting of my early years, and the prevailing temper of the times, the reader may find himself learning what it was like to grow up in the 1940’s and 1950’s, those supposedly bland and tranquil years. If I have written well, the reader will understand the choices I made, including those that I made by making no choices. I may also have illuminated for the reader the many drives that urged me on—paradoxical and inconsistent, yes, but if we know one thing for certain, it’s this: that we humans must accommodate and learn to live with the many paradoxes that make up the whole. These are the inconsistencies that we refer to when we speak of someone as having a “well-rounded” character.

In writing these memoirs, I have found unintended side-benefits, a phenomenon not unknown to memoir-writers. George Washington Davis, the Texas pioneer, wrote that the task of writing his life-history for his descendants, gave him “amusement and occupation in [his] present cheerful solitude.”<sup>11</sup> That is, his efforts

to recall the past and to set his life down in a coherent fashion provided a therapeutic diversion from the “cheerful solitude” he was then experiencing. Perhaps these memoirs were written in Davis’s old age, and that “cheerful solitude” was what we today would call “retirement.”

The writing of one’s memoirs can also be, in the words of the noted historian, novelist and Holocaust survivor-witness Elie Wiesel, the drawing up of a balance sheet of one’s life. The memoirist may find in the writing, as I have, that when that final account is rendered, there are neither as many assets as one had hoped for as a young man nor as many liabilities as one feared from the vantage point of the eighth decade.

A related image is that of the summing up, of the closing of the circle: *"As we begin our long descent to the country we won't be coming back from, our memory seeks to go back to where it started."*<sup>12</sup>

One of the unanticipated but very real benefits of writing these memoirs is that it has enabled me to put to rest certain memories which constantly nag at me, as when a line from a poem or song comes to mind, and you find that you cannot rest easy until you have written it down. This too is an oft-noted effect of memoir-writing. Elie Wiesel has written that *"There are reminiscences which will not lie down until the tongue has published them."*<sup>13</sup>

Wiesel has also said in a different context that *"writers write because they cannot allow the characters that inhabit them to suffocate them."*<sup>14</sup> I did not set out to write these memoirs for that purpose, but committing memories to paper has given me, quite unexpectedly, that sense of having unburdened myself, of having shifted a heavy load from my psyche.

Are all these reasons, mine and others’, no more than make-weights? Is the memoir nothing more than an exercise in conceit, a display of crass self-centeredness? It was out of that very fear that, the Father of Our Country, George Washington, wrote no memoirs, left behind no reminiscences. He told a would-be biographer that

*I had rather glide gently down the stream of life, leaving it to posterity to think and say what they please of me, than by any act of mine to have vanity or ostentation imputed to me.*<sup>15</sup>

I am comfortable that in these memoirs I have by and large suppressed the temptation to conceit and self-promotion. Had

these been my goals, I would have pushed to the foreground the triumphs, the correct decisions and the happy times and omitted or played down the trials, the moral confusion, the false starts, the roads not taken that should have been taken. The passing of time has not eradicated memories of setbacks and the humiliations, whether inflicted by me on others or by others on me, or self-inflicted. “*Victories are fleeting,*” the late cartoonist Charles Schulz said, “*but losses we always live with.*”<sup>16</sup> More than two centuries ago, Rousseau in his *Confessions* wrote: “*It is not the criminal things that are hardest to confess, but the ridiculous and the shameful.*”<sup>17</sup> My negative memories refuse to fade away. They cause me some pain in the retelling, but I must include them to give the full picture of what I was and what I became and perhaps to provide the sought-for psychic catharsis.

These memoirs tell also of the risks that I took as a young man, of the outré paths that I sometimes followed. What is youth for, after all, but for risk-taking and for unscheduled stops along the road, so to speak? In his magnificent memoirs, *Speak, Memory*,<sup>18</sup> my old professor, Vladimir V. Nabokov, famously likened life to “*a passage between two unknowns, the one preceding it and the one following it.*” I see it, more precisely, as a rope bridge over an abyss. One man may tread it cautiously, carefully placing one foot in front of another, intent only on reaching the other side. Another man, seeking to make the traverse as interesting as possible, cavorts playfully as he crosses, causing the bridge to swing dangerously from side to side. The prudent walker is more likely to get to the other side; the cavorter may not get there, but if he does, he will look back with satisfaction on those occasions when he dared to test his limits. In my earlier years, I, too, tested my limits, and am glad of it. Don’t most of us seek to balance predictable stability and unbearable risk?

*Stranded as we are,  
equally tormented by conflicting loves,  
Trying as best we can to find the place  
between passion and boredom,  
between ecstasy and despair –  
The life we can but dream of and  
the one we cannot bear.*<sup>19</sup>

Some years ago I encountered just such a swinging bridge in Patapasco State Park, outside of Baltimore. Pausing before crossing,

I watched as young boys on the span recklessly moved from one side of the bridge to the other, causing it to sway back and forth, to the accompaniment of manic laughs from the boys and shrieks from the girls who stood there with them. Risk-taking goes with youth. More prudent now, I waited to get onto the bridge until the swaying had stopped and the boys on the bridge had exited at the other end.

Throughout this foreword and in the body of the book, I have liberally used quotations from prominent writers. Most of these quotations came from books that I was reading concurrently with the writing of these memoirs; I was reading them not for research but for my own pleasure. My purpose in using these quotations has been to show that the feelings and situations described in this book have their parallels and antecedents in what others have written of their own lives or of their fictional characters. They appear to be a common element of the human condition. Even this thought itself has its literary antecedent in Flaubert's masterpiece, *Madame Bovary*:

*"Have you ever had the experience," Leon went on, "of running across in a book some vague idea you've had, some image that you realize has been lurking all the time in the back of your mind and now [that passage] seems to express absolutely your most subtle feelings?"*<sup>20</sup>

The raw material for this book comes largely from my own memories, for, as Graham Greene once said, "*A writer's childhood is the bank account that he'll draw on for the rest of his creative life.*"<sup>21</sup> If that is true of the novelist, how much more so of the memoir-writer! It is certainly true for me; that is, after all, the purpose of this memoir. The primary exception: Chapters 1 and 2, in which are described events that occurred when I was too young to have any detailed recollections of them. The information for those chapters comes from family documents and a hundred or more letters written by my father to his mother and other family members when he was in Spain, then in France and later in the United States. Hardly a day passed when he did not write back to Berlin. For Father,<sup>22</sup> no day was complete without a letter from his beloved "Mullah," his mother. If a day went by without a letter from her, he did not hesitate in his next letter to express his disappointment and chide her gently for her seeming inattentiveness.

Laboriously, using my vestigial German, and with the help of LEO's *German-English On-Line Dictionary*, I translated the typewritten

letters. My late aunt, Gabrielle Forrest,<sup>23</sup> was kind enough to translate the handwritten letters, because I could not decipher the old German script, let alone translate those letters.

Many other letters, from that time and from the earlier years before Father's marriage, remain untranslated, among them letters exchanged between my parents when they were courting. Even though they have both passed away, I feel the need to preserve their privacy by leaving these letters unread.

During my childhood, Mother had all these letters tied up in neat bundles, the bundles stacked neatly in an old orange crate. Grandmother must have saved Father's letters, brought them with her to America and then, after his death, turned them over to Mother. For years, they remained untouched in that crate on the uppermost shelf of Mother's clothes-closet. Only after she died and her belongings had been sorted out did I get my first glimpse of these letters. They represent a treasure trove of material, not only as a narrative of our personal history but for their description of the turbulent times in which my parents lived. I hope that by incorporating them as I have, I have done justice to those letters and, by extension, to the loved ones who poured out in those pages their joys, their disappointments and their concerns, and described their everyday existence as the gathering storm loomed over Europe.

I have not had extensive psychotherapy to provide illumination in the writing of these memoirs. No guru on a mountaintop has helped me to assemble the shards of my life into a comprehensible whole. In this journey, only the reader, silent and unresponsive but always in view, is the Aeneas to my Sibyl, the Dante to my Virgil.

And now, accompany me on the journey!

*My so-called particularities, my gestures, my ways  
and my mannerisms, I borrowed from all, without  
any exception. So everything in me passed on through  
my children. I am sewn between ancestry and posterity.  
I am a drop of water in the flowing river of time, a  
molecule in the mountain, a cell in a great family tree.*

*Heredity*, Oliver Wendell  
Holmes (1841-1935)

# 1

## BIRTH, EARLY YEARS

By parentage a German Jew, by birth a Spanish Jew and, since 1937, an American Jew . . . before my fourth birthday, I had been all three. Refugee, immigrant, New Yorker, university graduate, Army draftee, lawyer, liberal Democrat, introvert and ectomorph—I have been, or still am, these as well. They are all strands in a complex multi-textured fabric.

In tracing my journey through life's first three decades, a good place to start is in 1931, three years before my birth, at the University of Berlin. There my father, Georg Eduard Sachs, and my mother, Leonie Bernhardine Feiler, met as graduate students in the University's Faculty of Philology. Nurtured by their common background and common interests, their relationship blossomed into love. On October 3, 1932, Father and Mother were wed in a simple civil ceremony with Father's father, Curt Sachs, and Mother's uncle, Joseph Feiler, standing alongside as witnesses. Then, as we learn from the civil marriage certificate,

*The Registrar asked the bride and groom, individually and in succession, whether they intended to contract matrimony. The bride and groom answered this question in the affirmative, whereupon the Registrar declared that, in conformity with the Civil Code, they were from now on a lawfully wedded couple.*

Eight days later, the young couple stood together again in the rabbi's study at Berlin's *Neue Friedrichstrasse* synagogue, their

shoulders draped under a single *tallit* (prayer shawl). In a traditional Jewish wedding ceremony, they were married by a family friend, Rabbi Moritz Freier,<sup>24</sup> “in accordance with the laws of Moses and of Israel.”

Standing with Rabbi Freier and the man and woman who, two years later, would become my parents were the groom’s parents, Curt Sachs, then 51, and Irene Sachs, then 44. They were to be the two adults who, with my mother and my brother, would play central roles in my passage from infancy into adulthood.

At the time of his son’s wedding in 1932, Curt Sachs was at the peak of his career, a full professor at the University of Berlin and curator of its musical instrument museum, the author of dozens of books and monographs in his field and well-known in musicological circles in Germany, elsewhere in Europe and in America. Some 22 years earlier, when he was 29, Grandfather had published his first book in the field in which he was to play a leading role for the rest of his life.<sup>25</sup> In the two decades since then he had written widely on many aspects of music and the related arts: on the taxonomy or “organology” of musical instruments and on the music of the ancient world, and he had played a key role in setting up in Paris the *Anthologie Sonore*, a comprehensive library of recorded music. Already in 1932 he had earned the reputation that was to cause the winner of the 2002 Curt Sachs Award, given annually in his memory by the American Musical Instrument Society, to describe him in her acceptance speech as:

*Not only a musicologist but also an art historian, he influenced museum deontology and remains an exemplar of methodology in many fields.*<sup>26</sup>

Only a month before my parents’ wedding, Curt Sachs had sent off to the publisher in manuscript his *Eine Weltgeschichte des Tanzes*,<sup>27</sup> the book that would cement his reputation as a renaissance man who could write authoritatively in many arts-related fields. As a professor over the same quarter-century, he had taught men who were now themselves developing reputations throughout Germany as outstanding musicologists.

Although neither particularly tall nor robust, Grandfather was a physically striking man. His head, disproportionately large for his body, was set deeply into his chest and shoulders, almost obscuring his neck. His prematurely silver hair was swept back from a strong forehead and from his temples. In earlier life, he had sported a full

beard and whiskers; now he had only the drooping mustache and a neatly-trimmed goatee framing a large mouth with full lips. Behind his rimless eyeglasses were heavy-lidded eyes, the whites and pupils barely visible, giving him the appearance of a Chinese sage, a Confucius in Western garb.

Curt Sachs was the first in his family to have the benefit of a university education in Wilhelmine Germany. His parents, originally from Breslau, were part of that mass migration from the province of Silesia to Berlin in the mid-nineteenth century. Indeed, there was a joke prevailing at the time: "Everybody in Berlin is from Breslau." Curt's grandfather, Eduard Sachs (1810-1868) had launched a successful uniform-manufacturing business that bore his name, providing uniforms to the Kaiser's armies.<sup>28</sup> The labels sewn into uniforms manufactured by E. Sachs & Co. identified him as a "*Königlicher Hoflieferant*," the official designation for purveyors to the Kaiser, the equivalent in imperial Germany of the English designation, "By appointment to Her Majesty." After the death of Eduard Sachs, one of his sons, Louis Sachs, had carried on the business until his own death in 1906.

Standing beside Curt Sachs at my parents' wedding was his wife, Irene Lewin Sachs, the woman who two years later would become my grandmother. She was a slightly-built woman, not much over five feet tall and weighing little more than 100 pounds. Her most prominent feature were her hazel eyes, deeply set under a strong brow, and her brown hair, pulled tightly back and worn in a bun behind her head. Never in all the years that I knew her, not even on her deathbed, did I see that bun undone. In keeping with her times, Grandmother had no formal education beyond high school. She was the youngest of three children, all girls, born to Louis and Clara (Wolff) Lewin. She had married in 1907, at 19. Raised by French-speaking speaking governesses, she was fluent in that language, had passable English and Italian and read widely in those languages and in her native German. She had devoted herself over two decades to raising four children and managing a large household, including several servants, in the family's home at No. 2 Lichtenstein Allée.<sup>29</sup> She still found time outside her domestic duties to read and critique her husband's manuscripts before they were sent off to the publisher.

Also attending my parents' wedding in October 1932 were one of Father's sisters, Gabrielle (Gabie), 17, and his brother Ernst, 13.

Another sister, Eva Judith, 21, was away, pursuing graduate studies at the University of Freiburg in southwestern Germany.

Standing alongside his niece, Leonie, under the *chuppah*, the wedding canopy, was Joseph Feiler, her uncle. He was there in lieu of his late brother, Hermann, the bride's father, who had died at his desk of a heart attack at 41, shortly after being mustered out of the German Army in the last months of World War I. Since his brother's death, Joseph had carried on the family business, Gebrüder Feiler (Feiler Brothers) Furriers. My mother's brother, Helmut, then 21, was the only other member of her family to attend. Mother's younger sister Stefanie (Steffi), 16, was not present. Her mother, Elisabet, had not been invited.<sup>30</sup>

After the ceremony, Joseph Feiler gave a luncheon for the newlyweds and their families at his elegant home in Berlin's Charlottenburg district. The following day, the newlyweds left for a brief honeymoon on the island of Corfu, in the eastern Adriatic. It was on that island, during the honeymoon, that Father bought the black peasant cap that he wore as a *kipa* (Jewish skullcap, worn during prayers) and that I now wear on special occasions.

At the time of their wedding, Father, born January 31, 1909, was 24. Mother, born March 5, 1908, was a year older. Father had received his Ph.D. from Berlin University in June 1932, four months before his marriage; Mother had been awarded her doctorate the previous year. Father's particular philological interests lay in the link between German and Spanish, two languages seemingly unrelated, Spanish being a member of the Romance family of languages and German having Indo-Aryan roots. The connection between the two was the sixth-century invasion of Spain by the Visigoths, or West Goths. From the dense forests of Thuringia, the Visigoths swept westward through the Rhineland and France, then continued southward, conquering most of present-day northern and central Spain. Their dominion over that part of the Iberian peninsula lasted but a century. In 711 A.D. the Moors invaded Spain and defeated the Goths in a climactic battle on the banks of the Rio Guadaljete, near Jerez. But the Moors never conquered the northeast of Spain, the provinces of Navarre, Catalonia and Aragon. There the Visigoths remained, until they in turn were subjugated by the invading Franks under Charles Martel.

As reminders of their rule, the Visigoths left behind names of Germanic origin that they had given to the towns and villages over

which they had dominion. My father had written his doctoral dissertation on that phenomenon, entitled *Die Germanische Ortsnamen in Spanien und Portugal* (Germanic Place Names in Spain and Portugal). Twenty-five years later, the chairman of his doctoral committee, Professor Dr. Ernst Gamillscheg, would write in a letter to Mother that Father's dissertation was "an exceptionally mature academic performance, showing a definite talent for research in the history of language."

Through their philological studies, my parents were fluent in Spanish and familiar with Hispanic culture without ever having been in Spain. While he was completing his doctoral studies at the University of Berlin, my father's linguistic ability had enabled him to secure a position at the Spanish Embassy, teaching German to the embassy staff. With that contact, he was invited to a reception at the Embassy, where he met the ambassador, Dr. Amerigo Castro. That was to be a crucial event in my parents' lives, and mine. Don Amerigo had been a professor at the *Universidad Complutense de Madrid* before taking up his diplomatic post.<sup>31</sup> Favorably impressed with Father's fluency in Spanish and his familiarity with conditions in Spain, and aware also of the limited professional opportunities open to my father in Germany because of his Jewish faith, the ambassador used his influence to obtain for him a dual appointment in Madrid: as an instructor in German at the University, and as a research fellow at the University's *Centro de Studios Históricos*.

For Father, leaving Berlin for Madrid meant leaving his parents; his brother Ernst and sister Gabrielle, his grandmother, Clara Lewin, with whom he had an especially close relationship; and his many aunts, uncles and cousins. Weighing the need for these goodbyes against his career prospects in Berlin, then already dimmed by the strong showing of the National Socialist Party in the elections held in March 1932, Father must have realized that his professional and personal destiny lay elsewhere. His grandfather Louis Lewin, who had died three years earlier, in 1929, had been prescient about the Nazi menace in Germany, sagely telling his family already in the early 1920's that Jews were not safe in Germany. Events a decade later surely confirmed for Father that his grandfather had been right. By accepting a position in Madrid, he could escape what he saw as a bleak and increasingly dangerous future in Germany.

In any event, the decision was made, the offer accepted. Directly after my parents returned from their wedding trip in mid-October 1932, Father boarded the train in Berlin for the four-day trip to Madrid.. Mother would join him there in January 1933.

On arriving in Madrid, Father found a small apartment in a block-long building at Calle Gaztambide 17, near the University in Madrid's Moncloa neighborhood.<sup>32</sup> He was much taken by the landscaped inner courtyard and by the quiet that reigned throughout the building despite its proximity to the university. Gaztambide runs north-south, a block away from, and parallel to, the Avenida de la Princesa, the main artery that runs from the Gran Vía out to the University campus. It was in that apartment in Madrid that I was conceived and to which I was brought home as a newborn baby,<sup>33</sup> but it was at Santa Cristina Hospital on Calle O'Donnell that I was born on March 4, 1934. As I was my parents' firstborn son, I was also the first grandchild for Curt and Irene Sachs and for my maternal grandmother, Elisabet Leuchtag Feiler.

My parents named me Daniel, Hebrew for "God is my judge," and gave me the middle name Yehuda, or Judah, one of Jacob's ten sons, leader of the tribe of that name.<sup>32</sup> If my parents had adhered to tradition, I would have been named for one of my deceased grandfathers or great-grandfather. My name might have been Louis, the given name of my great-grandfather Lewin and of another great-grandfather, Curt Sachs's father, who had died in 1906. I might also have been named for Hirsch Lewin, a great-great-grandfather who had died in 1916, or after Hermann Feiler, my maternal grandfather, who died immediately after the Great War in 1918. Instead, my parents gave me as a first name the name of the great Hebrew prophet, Daniel, a "new" name in the Sachs family.

Obviously, none of us has a conscious recollection of our births, although there are those who claim that we can retrieve the memory of it if we try. We do, however, have contemporary reports from those most closely concerned with the event.

In the hospital nursery, I was but one of many babies born on March 4, 1934, scarcely distinguishable from the little Pepes, Pacos and Josélitos in the neighboring bassinets. The State marked my arrival with the issuance of a birth certificate, formally documented on heavy vellum and duly recorded in the Civil Register of Madrid's Congress District. On March 5, 1934, the day after my birth, Father

appeared at the local municipal court to attest to that event. The birth certificate, translated from the Spanish, reads:

*In Madrid, at a quarter past nine o'clock in the morning of the fifth day of March, nineteen hundred and thirty-four, before Don Enrique Gomez de la Granja, Municipal Judge, and Don Antonio Jerez Rosselly, substitute secretary, the birth is entered of a male child, which occurred at twenty-five minutes past one o'clock in the morning of the fourth day of March of the present year, in the Santa Cristina Hospital, Calle O'Donnell 53.*

*The child is the son of Don Jorge Sachs Lewin, University Professor, and Dona Leonie Feiler Leuchtag, both born in Berlin, Germany, 25 years of age, residing at Calle Gaztambide 17.*

*He is a grandson, on his father's side, of Dr. Curt Sachs and Sra Irene Sachs, born in Berlin, and on his mother's side of Sr. Hermann Feiler, born in Stettin, Germany, and Sra Elisabet Leuchtag, born in Breslau, Germany.*

*He is given the name: Daniel Yehuda.*

*This entry is executed in the Courthouse on the strength of a communication received from the above-mentioned hospital and of the appearance of the child's father.*

In this manner the Spanish civil authorities duly solemnized my birth in accordance with the civil code.

On the day I was born, the proud new father sent telegrams to his mother in Berlin and his father in Paris, notifying them of the arrival of their first grandchild. Since that October day in 1932 when he had stood in Rabbi Freier's study to help his son to solemnize his marriage to my mother, Grandfather had been driven from his teaching position, dismissed from his professorship at the University of Berlin under the Nazi law of April 11, 1933. Many like him, unable to find equivalent positions in their profession, had been forced to accept humble jobs in unrelated fields to support their families. Fortunately, Grandfather's international reputation had enabled him to re-establish himself in Paris and re-create a productive life there. Now he was teaching at the Trocadero Museum and directing the *Anthologie Sonore*, the comprehensive recorded collection of the world's music that he had earlier helped to establish. From his temporary haven in Paris, Grandfather

responded to Father's telegram on that same day with a letter to his daughter-in-law, the new mother:

*Paris, March 4, 1934*

*My dear Leonie:*

*I think that today you have to be the heroine of this letter! Women don't have much say in our society, but there's no denying the key role they play in the procreation of new life (childbearing). I'm sure you did it well, courageously and efficiently, and thus we can only hope that the baby will turn out to be a regular little guy. The horoscope is remarkable: the date 4334 with its symmetry (any car owner would be envious of such a license number) and with its double seven configuration.*

*That I was able to see this day! Nostalgic thoughts go back to my dear father, who so desperately wanted a grandchild. And look at all that's happened in the two years since we together climbed the Acropolis and watched Odysseus's traces gently lapping in the Ionian Sea, and Georgie had his fit of nerves!*

*You put me in a fine state; all fingers point at me, and my students help me into my coat. When I found the telegram after my morning's work at the Trocadero, I stood in front of the mirror for the longest time searching for signs of dignity, but saw only the makings of a beginner in this new role. If Paris were Berlin, you would have had my reply telegram much sooner. As it was, everything was closed and even the Main Telephone Center could not be reached by phone. Finally, I was able to dispatch the telegram from the inside of the Bourse [stock exchange]. However, you probably couldn't care less today, and George has probably learned the art of waiting by now. I hope the great event has not upset his already shattered nerves so much that he had to soothe them in the Männerkindbet.<sup>34</sup>*

Eight days after my birth, my parents, following the Jewish tradition, held in their home on *Calle Gaztambide* a *brit milah*, a ritual circumcision, the sanctifying event that unites the newborn male child with Abraham the patriarch and with every other Jewish male down to the present time. The *mohel* (ritual circumcisor) cut away my foreskin while saying aloud the prayers required by Jewish law, then dabbed a few drops of wine on my lips to calm me down.

*A sidelight: Perhaps because this Jewish ceremony was so seldom performed in Spain in those years, the mohel whom my father brought in to do the ritual cutting was not as skillful as he should have been. Fortunately, he erred on the side of caution, cutting too little rather than too*

*much, leaving a portion of the foreskin still attached. Eight years later, in 1942, surgery was performed at a New York hospital to finish the job.*

A small reception, given by my parents to mark the occasion, followed the ceremony. How moving that event must have been to those present! I was not only the first-born member of a new generation of Sachs and Feilers, but also one of the few Jewish boys to be born and circumcised openly without fear of discovery and betrayal on Spanish soil in the almost 450 years since *Los Reyes Católicos*, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, had by royal decree expelled all Jews from Spain. In the intervening four centuries, *conversos*, Jews who, while outwardly accepting baptism into the Christian faith, still practiced in secret and at great risk to themselves the age-old rites of Judaism, continued to hold circumcision ceremonies. A leading historian of the Inquisition has written that some secret Jews, after their newborn male babies had been baptized into the Christian faith, would bring them back home from the cathedral, wash off all traces of the chrism, the anointing oil, and then have their sons circumcised in the ancient Jewish tradition. Other *conversos* limited themselves to a “circumcision of the heart”:

*Because of the danger of discovery, for most of the [conversos], circumcision ceased being a viable component of Judaizing. Even before the Expulsion, we hear converts lamenting how they feared to circumcise their children. [Only] the staunchest Judaizers continued to circumcise their children—or themselves as adults—as a sign of the ancient covenant between God and Abraham. Some conversos rationalized that keeping the Jewish law in any measure counted as a kind of circumcision of the heart.<sup>35</sup>*

By 1934, the open celebration of the *b'rit milah* was no longer an unusual event, but it was still far from an everyday occurrence. After all, the four-century life of the Inquisition had formally ended by papal decree only on July 15, 1834, a century before my birth. Even in the early nineteenth century, a ritual circumcision would have been performed only in the greatest secrecy. That history must have been on the minds of those who attended the ceremony. The rite of circumcision is meaningful even on its own terms as the entry of a newborn Jewish male into the Covenant of Abraham, and still more so among those present at my *b'rit*, who, we can assume,

were well aware of the significance of this event in post-Expulsion Spain.

Although the 1492 expulsion decree had never been formally revoked, Jews were already filtering back to Spain, to their beloved *Sfarad*, by the mid-19th century. Most of them came from Spain's African colonies. Remembering the horrors of the Inquisition, 19th century rabbis from central and eastern Europe had placed Spain and Portugal under a *herem*, a ban, prohibiting Ashkenazi Jews from traveling to those countries. Even non-religious Jews, who would ordinarily have paid no heed to rabbinical edicts, shied away from travel to Spain. Starting in the 1920's, Central European Jews, driven by the increasingly bleak situation in their homelands, began slowly to arrive in Spain. However, even at its post-Expulsion peak in the 1930's, the entire Jewish population in Spain, both Sephardic and Ashkenazi, did not exceed 6,000. The only cities with major synagogues were Madrid and Barcelona. The Jewish immigrants' stay in Spain was not to be a lengthy one; by the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939, almost all of them had left Spain, except those who were passing through as war refugees from elsewhere in Europe.

I do not know if my parents were members of *k'lal Israel*, the organized Jewish community in Madrid. They did, however, observe conscientiously the Jewish holidays and the Sabbath. Family members, Jewish faculty and students and German-Jewish émigrés passing through Madrid came to our apartment to help my parents celebrate the start of Sabbath with a Friday evening *oneg Shabbat* (the repast after the lighting of the Sabbath candles) and the *Havdalah* service, the conclusion of the Sabbath, an hour after sundown on Saturday.

After seeing to my circumcision, Father next declared my citizenship. As the son of German parents, I was by law a German citizen. But, born on Spanish soil, I could also claim Spanish citizenship if I renounced my claims as citizen of another country. My father, loving Spain, hating what Germany had become and therefore zealous to secure the protections of Spanish citizenship on my behalf, appeared before a judge in Madrid to make the necessary arrangements:

*Before Don Mariano Marcial Fernandez-Rodriguez Alvarez, Municipal Judge of the University District, and Don Gerardo Duval Rodriguez, his secretary, there appeared Don Jorge Sachs Lewin, born in Berlin, Germany, of age, married, University Professor, residing at Calle Gaztambide 17, holding an identification card as of the present fiscal year, and deposes:*

*That he is making an election for Spanish citizenship, in accordance with Article 23 of the Constitution of the Spanish Republic and Articles 17 and 18 of the Civil Code, on behalf of his minor son, Daniel Sachs Feiler, born in Madrid on the fourth day of March of the present year, from the marriage of the applicant with Dona Leonie Feiler Leuchtag, and whose birth was registered in the Civil Register of the Congress District on the fifth day of March. After the applicant had confirmed his petition and legally renounced, on behalf of his son, his German nationality or any other that might correspond to him, and after consent had been given by the District Attorney (Attorney General), the Judge had these presents issued to the applicant, with the provision that all necessary documents be made out to him and this transacted case be filed, without detriment to the rights that may correspond to the son on his coming of age.<sup>36</sup>*

So, within the first six months after my birth, I had been formally entered into the Covenant of Abraham, with the physical signs to prove it, and had discarded my German nationality to become a citizen of the Spanish Republic. Twelve years later, I raised my right hand in the ceremonial courtroom of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York in Lower Manhattan and swore allegiance to the United States of America.<sup>37</sup>

## THE YEAR OF FLIGHT

**R**abbi Shlomo Riskin, a contemporary Jewish scholar of great distinction, has written:

Ma'aseh avot siman l'banim: *"The actions of the fathers are a sign of and a signpost for what will happen to the children."* It may well be that . . . our wanderings were more than punishment; they also served as necessary way stations in the Jewish journey to redemption.

Perhaps [our] Exilic wanderings are strangely and critically decisive for Jewish survival, that our perspective and understandings were broadened and deepened by each exile experience, that our appreciation for our homeland was heightened by the dangers of homeless wandering.

Each particular Diaspora was important in its own right, made its unique contribution to the text (Oral Law) and texture (customs) of the sacred kaleidoscope which is the Jewish historical experience, and each is worthy of being recorded and remembered.

Even the Holocaust memorial books, those heroic examples of survivors frantically and neurotically trying to preserve what little that can be preserved of lost, destroyed worlds, may be seen as an almost contemporary fulfillment of God's ancient command that we record our wanderings, remember where we lived and how we lived. We must remind ourselves in order to remake ourselves.

Perhaps the Jews didn't invent history, but they certainly understood that he who forgets the past will never celebrate a future. Indeed the written texts and the living textures we brought into and took out of every way station in our history became the foundation stones of our continuity as well as our creativity.<sup>38</sup>

It was my parents' *schicksal*, their destiny, to be born into a generation of European Jews who would unwillingly be part of the greatest of those Exilic wanderings of which Rabbi Riskin speaks. They were fleeing not from famine or natural disaster, but from the chaos, starvation, brutality and death which the modern Amalek<sup>39</sup> was intent on inflicting upon them.

For the fortunate ones, my family among them, their flight ended successfully in emigration and a new life in freedom. Among those who stayed behind, the greatest number of them, primarily the very young and the very old, were swept up into the killing machine. Others went into hiding, surviving by their own pluck and luck or with the help of Righteous Gentiles. Some who went underground were betrayed by those to whom they had entrusted their lives or by informants. Countless others, unable to face what lay in store for them, took destiny into their own hands, resorting to an overdose of Veronal or the opened gas jets of the kitchen range, or found relief from persecution in the welcoming waters of the River Spree and other German waterways.

My parents and my father's parents found a new life in peace and freedom on these shores but, as the story of their flight-year makes clear, their escape was no Sunday walk in the park. They had to battle with the immigration authorities in four countries, assemble, under the most arduous circumstances, the documents that would enable them to leave one country and enter another, and, having overcome these obstacles, survive financially in their adopted country until they could once again find gainful employment. There must have been many moments of doubt when it seemed that there might be no happy ending, that the doors to freedom would one after the other be slammed in their faces.

At the same time, my parents had several important and life-saving advantages in their struggle to escape the fate that lay in store for so many other European Jews. My father's family was well-educated and appeared on the surface at least to be fully integrated into the academic world. Economically, the Sachsens were members of the new bourgeoisie that had successfully made the transition in the mid-19th century from the small towns of Silesia to Berlin, at that time the world's fastest growing metropolis. Even so, they were committed Jews, strong supporters of Zionism after that movement was founded at the turn of the 20th century and keenly aware that in Germany, regardless of their career successes, they

would always be identified as *Deutsche Juden*, German Jews, never solely as *Deutschen*. For these reasons, my father and his family were not blind, as were so many other German Jews, to the peril posed to their personal safety by Nazism.

My parents had another important advantage in their flight to freedom. Because they were young, they did not have a substantial investment in established careers, as did those who had progressed further up the academic ladder. As a result, they were freer to make life-changing decisions. It was also crucial to the successful outcome of their flight that my grandmother Irene Sachs's uncle, John Wolff, his wife Margaret (Grete), and their sons, John and Frank, had already emigrated to the United States ten years earlier. Financially well-off, the Wolffs were willing to vouch for their Sachs relatives and give them affidavits of support. Finally, the family's prospects for employment in the new land were excellent. They had, or seemed to have, readily marketable skills, they carried with them letters of reference from internationally known scholars and they already spoke serviceable English on their arrival in this country.

Most important to the family's successful escape was its timing. Had they been less aggressive and more dilatory in their effort to leave, or more sanguine about the nature of the Nazi threat, they might have found the doors to sanctuary closed to them, as did so many thousands of others.

Might my parents be called Holocaust victims? Today, seventy-five years after the event, there is a certain perverse cachet attached to that label—one hears individuals who escaped from Europe before the Holocaust describe themselves as such. My parents, who left Germany early in the Hitler years, were not given to such exaggeration. They would have agreed with the German-Jewish refugee who has written:

*We should preserve in eternal honor the memory of those who perished in the Holocaust. We who escaped do not belong in the community of those victims . . . whose ghosts are unforgiving. By virtue of survival, we belong with you who weren't exposed to the genocidal danger, and we know there is a black river between us and the true victims.*<sup>40</sup>

Certainly the ranks of Holocaust victims include not only those who were killed at the hands of the Nazis and their allies, but also those who died by their own hand or whose lives were cut short by

disease in the death camps.<sup>41</sup> We can justifiably extend the term as well to the many who were still alive at war's end but who were physically and psychologically mere shells of what they had been before the war. In that sense, it is fair to say that Father was himself a Holocaust victim. In the effort to save his loved ones and himself, he exhausted his physical strength, which was not great to begin with. Like Moses, he led his family to the Promised Land. He was, like Moses, the rescuer of his people, our family. We owe our very lives to his perseverance. Father, unlike Moses, crossed over, but died, much too soon, before he could see his family adjust and succeed in America.

Without the Nazis' brutal intervention in my parents' life plan, they would undoubtedly have remained in Germany. In time, they would have obtained respectable academic appointments at Berlin University or at Heidelberg, Göttingen or another such top-flight academic institution and lived out their lives in teaching and scholarship, perhaps eventually to be honored for their achievements.<sup>42</sup>

But that tranquil future was not to be their destiny. Father and Mother were among the thousands of academics, Jews and non-Jews, who were uprooted, had their teaching and research privileges torn away, and were forced ultimately to flee their homeland while that was still possible.

The four years after my parents wed were turbulent years in their former home, Berlin, and in their adopted city, Madrid, giving a foretaste of what lay ahead. Even before my parents married in October 1932, there were sinister portents of what was to come. In the presidential election of March 1932, Hitler and his National Socialist Party had received 30% of the popular vote while the incumbent president, Paul von Hindenburg, received 49%.. Since no candidate received an absolute majority, a run-off was required. In that run-off, held April 10, 1932, Hitler received 36% of the vote, Hindenburg 53%. On May 29, Chancellor Heinrich Brüning resigned under pressure from Hindenburg, effectively putting an end to the Weimar Republic and to democracy in Germany. On June 4, Nazis in the parliament, the Reichstag, succeeded in getting a majority of the deputies to vote in favor of the dissolution of that legislative body. As its last act, the Reichstag called a new election, to be held in July. In those elections, the Nazi Party won 230 seats out of 630 seats in the Reichstag, which left them still short of a

majority. Hitler demanded that Hindenburg name him Chancellor, but Hindenburg refused. Murder and violence soon erupted on a scale never before seen in Germany. Roaming bands of brown-shirted thugs walked the streets singing Nazi songs and looking for fights. All these events undoubtedly convinced Father that his future lay outside Germany and spurred him to create a new life elsewhere for himself and his fiancée.

The portents became even more ominous in early 1933, when Father was already in Madrid and his new wife was preparing to join him there. Under pressure from his son, a committed Nazi, President Hindenburg named Hitler chancellor, and on January 30, 1933, one day before my father's 24th birthday, Hitler took the oath of office, to the cheers of his supporters. A month later, fire consumed the Reichstag building. To enable the Nazis to blame a so-called enemy of the state for the crime, a young Dutch Communist, Marinus van der Lubbe, was arrested, tried and executed. The fire gave Hitler the opportunity he needed to arrest all the Communist Reichstag deputies. Hitler also obtained from President Hindenburg the authority to issue a decree giving the Nazi government the power to arrest anyone it considered a threat to the nation and to suppress the free speech of its opponents.

One month later, the Reichstag passed the Enabling Act, effectively voting itself out of existence as an independent legislative body. Legislative powers were transferred to Hitler's cabinet for a period of four years. By this act, dictatorial powers were finally conferred, with the outward trappings of legality, on Adolf Hitler.

In the next eight weeks, two more events occurred which sent shivers of fear down the spines of my parents and grandparents and other German Jews. On April 1, the Nazis called for a boycott of all Jewish businesses. Storm Troopers stood menacingly in front of Jewish-owned stores. They painted the Star of David on shop windows and below it messages reading, "Don't Buy from Jews" and "The Jews are Our Misfortune." A week later, a law was passed banning Jews from the civil service, from the schools and the universities. On May 10, 1933, at the call of Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels, Nazi youth ignited huge bonfires in Berlin's Operaplatz and elsewhere in Germany, pitching into the flames the books of Heinrich Heine, Sigmund Freud, Albert Einstein, Thomas

Mann and other leading authors of works deemed “degraded” or “unpatriotic” by the Nazis.

This was followed on July 14, 1933 with a decree banning all political parties in Germany other than the Nazis. All non-Nazi organizations, including political parties and trade unions, were formally disbanded and driven underground. So, in the year before I was born, the groundwork had been put in place for the *Götterdämmerung* that was to come.

The race to that *Götterdämmerung* accelerated just before and after my birth. On February 25, 1934, a week before my arrival, one million Nazis gathered in towns and cities across Germany and swore an oath of loyalty and obedience to Adolf Hitler. In a speech on that occasion, Hitler’s deputy, Rudolph Hess, screamed out “Adolf Hitler is Germany and Germany is Adolf Hitler. He who takes an oath to Hitler takes an oath also to Germany!” Millions raised their right hand in the Hitler salute, swearing allegiance to *der Führer* and to Germany.

I was not yet three months old on June 1, 1934, the night that would come to be known in German history as “The Night of the Long Knives.” Hitler in his paranoia had become convinced that several former comrades from his Munich days were plotting to overthrow his government and kill him. So, on that night, Hitler’s Gestapo thugs arrested Ernst Röhm and other old-time Nazis. They were executed without trial, along with many other highly-placed Germans with whom Hitler had a score to settle.

Two months later, when I was scarcely five months old, President von Hindenburg died. Hitler had arranged that, upon von Hindenburg’s death, the offices of President and Chancellor would be combined. In a plebiscite held later that year, 90% of the public voted their approval of the changes that Hitler had made and proposed to make. These were later to be codified in the infamous Nuremberg Laws of September 1935, which stripped German Jews of their citizenship and other legal rights, barred them from holding office and from jobs in the civil service, the media, farming, teaching, and, eventually, from practicing law and medicine.

From a distance, in their Madrid home, my parents were well aware of what was happening in Germany, reading of it in the Madrid newspapers and in letters from family members who had stayed behind in Germany. Returning to Germany in summer 1935 to visit family and friends, my parents saw at firsthand what they

had only read of from afar. They were profoundly disturbed to see the red, white and black swastika flag flying from every building and Hitler salutes taking the place of handshakes in greetings on the street, to hear on all sides of the restrictions imposed on Jewish life and the tales of humiliations visited on Jews. My parents felt a profound relief on leaving Germany to return to Spain, their relief tempered with deepening concern over the fate of the loved ones who remained behind.

On March 4, 1936, two years to the day after I was born and in the same Madrid hospital, my brother Benjamin came into the world, his birth solemnized as mine had been two years earlier.

While the family was growing, my parents preoccupied with their small sons and their lives in academia, Spain, too, was descending into chaos. The nation had been governed since 1931 by a coalition of left-wing parties referred to as the Second Republic. Immediately upon taking power, the new president, Niceto Alcalá Zamora, and his supporters had forced the reigning monarch, Alfonso XIII, into exile. Over the next two years, the fledgling Spanish democracy began to come apart, pulled from the right by the clerical and monarchical forces and from the left by the Communists and anarchists. In the election of 1933, the conservatives won enough seats in the *Cortes*, the parliament, to regain control. To assure their cooperation, the Premier gave the rightists' leader, José Mariá Gil Robles, three key portfolios in the new cabinet.

Seeing this as an attempt to re-establish the former autocratic regime, the *Confederacion Generale de Trabajadores* (the central workers' alliance), called a general strike on October 1, 1934. I was 7 months old.

*October, 1934 will always live in the memory of Spain as the period of the workers' heroic answer to the initial attempt to inaugurate a fascist dictatorship. On October 1, 1934, the fascist cliques . . . aimed at provoking civil war by putting their men in the new cabinet. Faced with a point-blank threat of a fascist dictatorship along the Italian and German model, the Spanish workers decided to wage a desperate battle. The Republican central government called on General Franco and other generals to put down the revolt in Asturias, using Moroccan troops, which they did with terrible efficiency and at a cost of thousands of lives.<sup>43</sup>*

The revolt of the Asturian miners, brutally put down by the central government, was the first act in the evolving Spanish

tragedy. In the parliamentary elections of February 16, 1936, the so-called Popular Front, a coalition of Communists, Socialists and Anarchists, won a narrow victory and cracked down on monarchists, on the Church and on landowners. Rebelling against these measures, the Right struck back on July 17, 1936. Two days later, General Francisco Franco took command of the rebel forces, putting his Moroccan troops ashore on the Iberian mainland under the Nationalist flag. From every direction, the Nationalist armies advanced toward the ultimate prize, Madrid. We can well imagine my parents' concern and consternation as their beloved Spain began to disintegrate, exposing them personally to considerable danger.

With a two-year-old son and a newborn infant, our family was at ground zero as the University campus and its surroundings become the focus of bitter fighting and regular bombings:

*The forces of General Franco irrupted from the South, as had the Moors in centuries gone by, and quickly swept across the southern plains and mountains toward Castile. The invading army was soon within gunshot of Madrid, the Republican capital. Here it met the main force of the Republican army, and was slowed to a walk. Finally, the decision was made to besiege the city, and over the next three years the two armies faced each other at the outskirts of the capital, in the vicinity of the present University City campus. Here many a bloody battle ensued. But the besieging forces were unable to enter Madrid, which they bombarded unceasingly. . . The old University City buildings were completely destroyed in the fight.<sup>44</sup>*

The Spanish Civil War was the first armed conflict between the forces of fascism and the Western democracies, although the governments of France, Great Britain and the United States preferred to look the other way and not commit their forces in support of Spain. It was also the first conflict in which military airpower was intentionally directed at innocent civilian populations. Hitler and Mussolini sent men, tanks and warplanes into action on behalf of Franco's army. For the Condor Legion, an arm of the Luftwaffe, Spain became the testing ground for World War II.

The scant support that the Republicans mustered on the other side came primarily from the worldwide Socialist movement, the Comintern (Communist International) and the Anarchists, but these movements of the Left expended as much effort in fighting among themselves as in fighting the Nationalist rebels. You can read about it in George Orwell's fine book, *Homage to Catalonia*.<sup>45</sup> Hundreds of

young Americans, filled with democratic zeal to stem the tide of fascism in Europe, volunteered for the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. They fought and they died on the slopes of the Sierra Guadarrama, northwest of Madrid. Years later, as a teenager, I would learn the song that the men of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade had sung of that battle:

*It was once in the hills of Guadarrama,  
we made the Fascisti cry "mama."  
With our guns and our tanks, we thinned Franco's ranks,  
and sometimes we used-ah the bomb-ah.*

All too often, however, it was the Republican ranks that were "thinned" as "Franco's ranks" advanced inexorably on Madrid.

My parents were loyal supporters of the Republican regime. It would go badly for them if they were still in Madrid when Franco's armies entered the city. The more immediate danger for them and for their children were the bombs that the Fascist warplanes were daily dropping on the city to soften it up for the final assault. Mindful that the Germans had used poison gas in World War I against civilian populations, the Republican government distributed gas masks in Madrid.

Father was well aware of the increasing danger. In a letter written on August 6, 1936, just three weeks after the outbreak of the war, he described his routine to his cousin, Ursula Marcuse, then already living in Palestine:

*At 7:00 a.m. I go to the park with Danielito. Because of the civil unrest, the park is almost empty . . . From the Sierras you can hear the artillery thundering.*

As non-Spaniards fled the country "in teeming droves," to use Father's expression, the German Embassy offered to send German nationals, at the Embassy's expense, to Alicante, a port on Spain's Mediterranean coast. From there, they would be taken by ship and train back to Germany. Grandfather, his teaching position at Berlin University terminated by edict of the Nazi regime, had left Germany and was living in Paris. His wife, my grandmother, was well advanced in her efforts to leave Berlin with her daughter, Gabrielle, and her son, Ernst. With his family gone or about to leave and understanding the perilous situation of the Jews in Germany, it was clear to Father that it would be folly to accept the

German Embassy's offer. In his August 6, 1936 letter to his cousin Ursula, Father concluded wryly that *"for us, on various grounds, [acceptance of the German offer] is not advisable and, for the time being, not necessary."*

Under the constant threat of air raids and with gloomy forebodings of still worse times ahead, the *Centro* faculty was completely demoralized. Father wrote that the few faculty members who still came in to work did nothing but stand around in the corridors and spread rumors. To stay busy, Father tried to create work for himself but, like his colleagues, he had lost his zeal for research and writing.

Life was difficult at home as well. To make ends meet, Father and Mother had taken in a boarder, Herr Retter. He had the bedroom to himself, while my parents, with their two small children, crowded into the living room. The boarder tried to stay out of the way, but psychologically, Father found that it was a real burden for him and for us. He wrote home that

*it would be really nice if I could get back into my own room, if he didn't sit for hours just stirring his coffee, if he removed his shaving brush and his hair from the lavatory sink, and so on.*

The war caused severe food shortages. Farmers put their lives at risk if they enter the fields to harvest their crops. As a result, the crops rotted where they fell. Carrying food from farm to market was equally risky. Mother and hundreds of other women spent their mornings queuing up for milk, bread and potatoes.

Because Jewish students could no longer pursue university studies in Germany, Father's younger sister Eva Judith, then 25, had transferred from the University of Freiburg to the University of Basle, in Switzerland. Now, having completed her doctoral studies, she had to go elsewhere, since returning to Berlin was out of the question, but she wrote to Father that she could not decide on a destination. On August 10, 1936, Father replied:

*I fully understand your difficult situation. Where can you possibly go? To come here would be out of the question for several reasons. In the first place, the border is probably closed. Secondly, I cannot assume responsibility for your safety. Thirdly, we don't know if we ourselves will have enough to eat much longer. Lacking potatoes, butter, milk, meat and fish, it requires all of Leonie's cooking skills to put a meal together. For the time being, she*

*is using her great imagination to overcome all these difficulties, but I fear that if you joined us you would come up short.*

He maintained an attitude balancing optimism with realism:

*Things aren't as bad as you think. There is, to be sure, a scarcity of certain foods [and] we have the burden of a very uncomfortable present (psychologically uncomfortable) and a future that is anything but rosy. Beyond that, we're not even sure if we're going to stay here. For the past two weeks the front has been in a state of chaos. If the Rightists make headway in their attack on Madrid, we too will be looking to leave, since Madrid will be defended to the last man against the extremists' [Rightists'] rule. We hope it won't come to that . . .*

We can picture the city descending into that chaos that Father described in his letter. The Left had commandeered all private cars. Buses and trucks that once plied the city's streets were now used to transport troops to the front. The anarchists' red and black flag flew everywhere, from palaces and villas to the humblest of hovels. Father observed that Madrileños no longer dressed as they did before the war. The men were walking around without hats and in shirts without collars, the women were barelegged, without stockings. He reported that at night he could hear the "pim-pim of the revolvers and the answering pum-pum-pum of rifles all over the city, really loud." The men of the Guardia Civil were downstairs, patrolling in the courtyard of our apartment house. Father ended his letter to his sister by saying that the time for air raid drills was now over; the next time the sirens sounded, it would be the real thing. "We have a suitcase packed," he said, "against any eventuality."

That "eventuality" arrived soon enough. The family held out in Madrid for another month, while the military situation on the front worsened and living conditions in the city continued to deteriorate. Finally, in early September 1936, we escaped by train to Alicante, the same city from which the German embassy in Madrid had offered to evacuate German nationals stranded in Spain. This city of some 200,000 on Spain's Mediterranean coast was supposedly in a neutral zone and therefore, at least in theory, safe from attack by Franco's nationalists. Known in earlier times and again in recent days as a beautiful beach resort, Alicante became during the Civil War the Republicans' major port of entry for men and materiel.

Under the banner of the International Brigade, men from all over Europe and the Americas arrived by ship at Alicante and from there left immediately for the front lines. Two years later, with the defeat of the Republic looming, the rag-tag remnants of the Brigade would sail home from that same port.

The family remained in Alicante for two months. It seemed for Father to be a surreal time and place. In a letter to Berlin, he described the city as being

*exactly as you have probably pictured it—a wide blue bay, on the left and right bare brown hills, and along the beach a main street lined with several rows of palm trees, with chairs and benches underneath. It's all very pretty, when you have your head clear for such things and are intent on enjoying a holiday.*

After two nights at the expensive Palace Hotel, Father rented a pleasant apartment with a balcony where we were to remain during our two-month stay in Alicante. My parents lived the outwardly languid life that Ernest Hemingway and other American expatriates might have lived in pre-Castro Havana, the life that many refugees in other picturesque locations—Marseilles, Genoa, Lisbon and Istanbul—were even then living as they awaited the issuance of the treasured visas to their final destinations. Afternoons were spent at the sidewalk tables of one of the cafés on the Calle Mayor. Father described it as a “bazaar street,” closed to automobile traffic. My parents could bring their two small boys with them without worrying that, if the boys got away from under their watchful eyes, they might be hit by a car. Sometimes Father and Mother sat at that café table all afternoon, nursing one cup of coffee, so as not to dissipate their meager savings. Often, they shared a table with some of the numerous German-Jewish friends who had also escaped from Madrid and found themselves similarly stranded in this unlikely place.

My parents' casual lifestyle at this down-at-the-heels resort was reflected in the clothes they wore. Father reported that he was still wearing the same broken-down canvas shoes that he had worn all summer. His light linen pants had long ago lost their crease; they were spotted and badly in need of a cleaning. His shirts, he wrote, were ten years old, the collar worn and threadbare, with a suit jacket or pullover on top. The rest of the family, he said, looked equally shabby.

My earliest memory in life, from that surreal time in Alicante, is one of rejection and exclusion. A toddler, two-and-half years old, I am squatting on the beach, to my right the calm waters of the Mediterranean lapping at my feet, to my left the cabanas under the palm trees. Another toddler, Donatino, sits there with me. He has a bunch of grapes in his hand and is eating them without “sharing.” I reach for the grapes and say, urgently, “*Donatino, uva, uva,*” and cry bitterly when he stubbornly pulls them away from my grasp.<sup>46</sup>

Despite the seeming tranquility, the long afternoons whiled away over coffee and pastry, my parents were understandably under considerable stress. They were stateless refugees, having no idea of how long they could remain in Alicante and where else they could go. How and where would Father earn a living? They were certain that they would leave Spain, but which country would open its doors to them? They had only to look out to sea to be reminded that they were in a war zone. Anchored in the bay, within sight of the beach, were warships of many nations. Father wrote that “you can take your pick of Portuguese, Argentinian, British, German, Italian and French naval vessels.” In the harbor, launches scooted back and forth between those ships and the docks, unloading war materiel, while soldiers marched in formation in front of the seaside hotels.

Father was not one to lie in front of the steamroller and wait for it to flatten him and his family. Within a month after his arrival in Alicante, he reported that he was “preparing himself for his future life” by taking English lessons from a German Jew, a former high school teacher, who had lived in Alicante for many years. Father added that he was keeping his options open, as we say today: “As if that weren’t enough, I’m also taking up Hebrew.” A month later, he was making excellent progress in English, reading a novel a day. Soon, Father said, he would know as much English as his teacher. The trouble was that he wanted to hone his English conversation skills, but knew no other English-speaking person in Alicante with whom he could speak the language. .

All about him, friends, colleagues and acquaintances were leaving or planning to leave. One family departed for Palestine, another for South America; everyone had plans. The circle of friends remaining was getting smaller and smaller. “What times we live in!” he mused in one letter, and went on to share his thoughts on the next step in our own journey:

*For the time being, we are staying put here, and not leaving. We're thinking, though, about going to Paris. The French warships sail from here to Toulon, the English ones to Marseilles.*

Paris had the advantage of a reunion with Vati (his father), but living there would present problems too. First of all, Father would have to obtain a residency certificate from the French government, and what could he do there? How would he earn a living? And, after Paris, where to? My parents must have realized early on that no place on the European continent would be a safe haven for them.

In late October, Father learned that his last ties with his professional life in Spain had been severed. A notice came in the mail, informing him of his termination from the *Centro de Studios Históricos*. It was nothing personal: he was one of hundreds to receive that notice, because the entire university was shutting down for the duration of the military emergency.

Within the next week, life-changing decisions had been made and purposeful actions taken. By early November, Father and the rest of our little family were aboard *H.M.S. Woolwich*, a destroyer supply ship of the Royal Navy then riding at anchor in Alicante harbor. Writing to his mother in Berlin on November 5, 1936, he explained how we had come to be on that British warship. After two months at leisure, our situation in Alicante had become increasingly precarious, changing from day to day. The Anarchists had forced Father and Mother to surrender their passports, making them truly stateless persons. Now, as the Nationalist rebels gained the upper hand, the war had come to Alicante, formerly off-limits to bombers. The time for air raid drills was over. Live bombs were now falling on the city, one exploding very near our apartment. Moreover, since the attacking planes were German and my parents were German nationals, Father worried that hotheaded anarchists might single us out for revenge.

Having decided that there would be no more safety, no more rest, for them in Alicante, my parents placed themselves in the hands of the British consul there. That “delightful chap” asked only two questions: “Are you German?” and then “Are you Jewish?” When they answered “yes” to both questions, he told them that “of course” they could leave on a British ship. The next morning, our family and dozens of other refugees appeared, bags packed, on the

wharf. Father was much moved to see that the consul and his wife had come down to the quay to see to it that the refugees passed smoothly through customs and to wish them Godspeed. Ironically, a launch from a German cruiser, the *Deutschland*, lifted them from Spanish soil and, on its way back to the mother ship, dropped them off at the *Woolwich*. So began the family's *yetziath misfarad* (exile from Spain), as Father called it.

Once again, our family moved within a matter of hours from life-threatening stress to previously-unimaginable comfort. The officers and men of the *Woolwich* went out of their way to make life easy for us, giving the impression, Father wrote, "that they had made a special trip for our sake." We were given the use of an officer's stateroom with its own private bath, and an entire deck to ourselves. For breakfast, we were served bananas, butter and cheese—foods that Father and Mother hadn't seen for months. The steward asked them each morning how they would like their eggs cooked, and the tea was "unbelievably good." At night, after we boys had been put to bed, Mother and Father were invited to join the officers in the salon, where, over a whisky and soda, Father gave German lessons to the radio officer. Father commented that they were treated as if they were traveling first class and not *gratis*, at the cost of His Majesty's Government. "We hope," he concluded in his November 5, 1936 letter, "that the destroyer that is supposed to take us to Marseilles won't come for a long time, that the Revolution [the Civil War] continues indefinitely and that a British ship will always be there to rescue us."

For more than three days, the *Woolwich* rode at anchor in the harbor by day, moving offshore at night to avoid attacks by rebel aircraft. That was a real threat, because there had been air attacks on a Russian warship and an Argentinian liner. Ships of the great European powers, both friendly and hostile, were standing offshore, prepared to deal with any crisis. On the *Woolwich*, Father watched as the crew painted the Union Jack on the deck so that the ship would not be attacked, England being officially neutral in this conflict. Standing on the deck in the bright sunlight, he felt pangs of nostalgia as he made out through the haze the cabanas lining the beach, the cafés built out into the harbor, the Palace Hotel, where we had stayed on our arrival in Alicante, and, behind the hotel, the Villa Hermosa, where so many of Father's friends were even then still living.

Events took another dramatic turn on Wednesday, November 11. Our family was taken by launch back to the pier at Alicante, where we were joined by thirty other refugees also desperate to be taken to safety. At 1:00 p.m. on that day, still another launch brought us out to *H.M.S Greyhound*, a British destroyer. Father reminded himself that he had first arrived in Spain just a little more than four years earlier. In the years since then, his academic career had flourished, he had written productively, and he had seen his family grow with two small children, the younger one only eight months old. Now, with his family, he was leaving Spanish soil forever, bound for Marseilles to face an uncertain and precarious future.<sup>46</sup>

Although *H.M.S Greyhound* was crowded with refugees and crew, our little family still had a cabin to itself. From Alicante, the ship traveled first to Valencia and then reached Barcelona shortly after midnight, picking up additional “*flüchtlinge*”—refugees—in both cities. While the *Greyhound* was still in Spanish waters, a Nationalist warship gave chase. As Father watched, the *Greyhound’s* crew scrambled to battle stations, affixed the long guns to their mounts and brought shells up from below decks. The ship trained its guns on the pursuer but no shots were fired. The Nationalist vessel eventually broke off its pursuit.

At 2:00 p.m. on the afternoon of November 12, 1936, the little band of refugees landed safely in Marseilles. Within an hour, the four of us, Mother, Father and their two small sons, had cleared French customs, with the help of a few banknotes pressed into the right palms. We boarded the express train to Paris, and at 7:30 p.m. we arrived at the Gare de Lyon in Paris, there to be met and embraced by Grandfather. We had escaped from one increasingly dangerous threat; another chapter in our flight to safety was now to begin.

Our new home for the next five months was to be the hotel where Grandfather was staying, the Hotel St. Romain. The hotel was at No. 5 Rue St. Roch, a block-long street running north-south between the Rue de Rivoli and the Champs Elysee. Grandfather’s lodgings at the hotel had been adequate for him, a man then in his mid-50’s and accustomed to the creature comforts. Now that small room had to accommodate my parents and their two small sons as well. Mother slept in one twin bed, Grandfather in the other. I slept in the bathtub. Father shared the bathroom with me, his

mattress on the tiled bathroom floor, his head dangerously near the trap of the lavatory. Needless to say, the overcrowding was unpleasant for the entire family. Everyone was, to use the modern expression, “stressed out.” Grandfather could not use the one small table in the room as his desk because we needed it for eating. Mother washed clothes for the whole family in the bathroom sink and hung them to dry on clotheslines strung across the room. The adults yelled at the children and snapped at each other. The weather—cold and drizzly—forced Mother to stay cooped-up in the hotel room with her two sons and cast a pall over everyone.

To make matters worse, Benjamin, eight months old, was in constant pain because he was teething. The teething and the many ailments that babies are subject to—diaper rash, unexplained fevers, coughs and runny nose—kept him up for most of the night, making the adults miserable. They took sedatives to assure a sounder sleep. Grandfather tried sleeping with earplugs as well. The baby was also dosed with a variety of sedatives and sleeping pills, but, according to Father, they only served to agitate him even more. As if my infant brother’s crying were not bad enough, I was also grinding my teeth at night. Writing home to his mother in Berlin, Father compared that noise to the constant crunching of bonbons and sugar candy. Father said that the noises made by his two sons made his nights unbearable. It must have been so for Grandfather and Mother as well. The constant crying and yelling in our room also upset the other hotel guests; they pounded on the walls of our room and complained to the concierge. That embattled woman made it clear that she would be delighted to have us leave.

After two months at the hotel, Father, describing the “lousy atmosphere” there, summed it up in a letter home:

*The innkeepers hate us and try as hard as they can to make life miserable for us, add to that the constantly cloudy and rainy weather that so dampens our spirits, and the chilly attitude of the French toward us . . .*

If my parents could have afforded to do so, they would have rented separate quarters in Paris instead of squeezing in with Grandfather in his hotel room. Grandmother sent money and clothes from time to time, but every *centime* had to be measured out carefully. After all, Father was unemployed and had not been on a payroll for the past four months. Knowing that the family’s stay in Paris was to be brief and uncertain of its duration, Father could not

obtain paid work; he occupied his days in helping his father with his musicological research.

Father and Mother complained that the Paris merchants were constantly trying to gain an advantage, shortchanging them or seeking to substitute inferior goods for the ones they had purchased. Moreover, the trunk that contained Mother's clothes and mine had been lost en route from Alicante, so we arrived in Paris with only the clothes on our backs and the contents of small suitcases. Inquiries had been made with the Hapag-Lloyd Line, in hopes that the trunk had been sent to Germany in error, but in the meantime, new wardrobes would have to be purchased in Paris. Father reported that, financially strapped as we were, we would have to look for new clothes at the Paris equivalent of Goodwill Industries.

Finally, there was the overriding problem of the family's future; that is to say, its very survival. My parents knew that they would find safety nowhere in Europe. Two years earlier, Hitler, expressly abrogating Germany's treaty obligations, had occupied the Rhineland without opposition from the other European powers. It was clear that he would not be deterred from further conquest and that France, despite its seemingly impregnable Maginot Line, would fall quickly to the German armies.

The search for a new home, which had preoccupied Father since his days in Alicante, had narrowed down to two possibilities, Palestine and the United States. Palestine, declared by the Balfour Declaration of 1917 to be the Jewish homeland but then still under the British Mandate, was already home to Father's Aunt Herta and her sons, Fritz and Hans Jaffe, and to Father's Marcuse cousins, Ursula and Grete. The key to legal entry into Palestine was the *Certificat*, akin to a visa. In issuing that precious document, the Mandate authorities assigned a priority to Jews who had left Germany after April 1, 1933. Having left Germany six months earlier, in October 1932, Father did not have that priority. The other possibility was the United States. Until he could find out whether the gates to one or the other of these countries was open, he had to pursue both avenues and try to overcome the obstacles that each country was throwing into the path of would-be immigrants.

To smooth the way into Palestine, Father asked Dr. Freier, the family's long-time rabbi in Berlin, the same rabbi who had presided at his wedding five years earlier, to write letters on the family's behalf. Dr. Freier, now in exile in London, gladly wrote those letters to the Palestine immigration authorities, but nothing seemed to open doors there. Father wrote home that he was furious with the Mandate Authority's "trait" of not responding to letters. He wished that he could fire a cannon at the Palestinian Immigration Office to stir it to action. But the reality of the situation was that, even if he were successful in obtaining the Certificat to enter Palestine, he was not sure that he could survive there. For one thing, how would he earn a living? "Living off the land [i.e., farming] is out of the question," he wrote. At the time, his intrepid Marcuse and Jaffe cousins, staunch Zionists, were living the life of the *halutzim* (young pioneers) in Palestine, sleeping in tents and standing guard around-the-clock against Arab intruders. That was not the life that Father envisioned for himself and his family. Nor were the cities there an attractive prospect. German Jewish intellectuals such as Walter Benjamin were rejecting opportunities to emigrate to Palestine, even when faculty appointments to the Hebrew University in Jerusalem were open to them.<sup>48</sup>

Father's aunt Herta Jaffe, his mother's older sister, was already living in Palestine, in the pleasant Mediterranean city of Haifa, but she was still jobless. Father wrote of Herta that

*she can survive that, but I can't. I must have a job as soon as I get there. Since I am not guaranteed immediate employment [in Palestine], I must have another iron in the fire, and that is America.*

A compelling reason for Father's renewed interest in America as the final destination was the likelihood that his parents, my grandparents, would find refuge there. "It's really unbearable," he wrote to his mother,

*to think of sitting in Palestine without the prospect that you will ever come there, and without the prospect of even an annual get-together. One simply is not part of the world there [in Palestine]. I refuse to spend the rest of my life and yours without you.*

Prospects for emigration to America looked better. The New York Public Library was eager to have Grandfather join the staff of

its Music Division. Its director, Carleton Sprague Smith, had written to Grandfather that

*Your friends in this country have learned with real pleasure of the prospect of having you among them . . . Our heartiest good wishes and our assurance of the warm welcome awaiting you on your arrival . . . You will see whether you like us as much as I know we shall like you.*

As he struggled to open doors to the final destination, Father had also to make sure that the family could remain in France in the meantime. The French authorities had initially given him a three-month residency permit, which he now realized would have to be extended for an additional three months. That meant having to deal with the Ministry of the Interior and the Paris Prefecture of Police. More photos, more fingerprints; he complained, half in jest, that his thumb was numb from all the fingerprinting. Everywhere, it seemed, he was dealing with bureaucrats indifferent to the refugee's desperate plight.

In Germany and elsewhere, the Jewish community was rife with rumors. One man would whisper to another: "I have it on the best authority that this or that consulate is giving out visas." Then the rumor would pass from lip to ear, and then again. As passengers on a ship may rush *en masse* from its starboard rail to its port rail and back again to view the sights from this side of the ship or that one, so the Jews scurried from one consulate to another. They would stand on line for hours, only to learn that the rumor was untrue or that the entire quota of visas had been distributed and that there were no more to be had. So the process was repeated the next day and the day after that, at still other consulates. Years later, one who lived through that time recalled:

*Visas! We begin to live visas day and night. When we were awake, we were obsessed with visas. We talked about them all the time. Exit visas. Transit visas. Entrance visas. Where do we go? During the day we tried to get proper documents, approvals, stamps, etc. At night we tossed and dreamed about long lines, officials, visas. Visas!<sup>49</sup>*

In late December 1936, Father read of an increase in the quota for immigration to America, and urgently asked his mother to find out immediately what one had to do for one of the precious slots. The following month, he heard that the *Certificats* for entry into Palestine were to be given out on very short notice. The *Certificat*

came with strings attached: the recipient would have to decide to leave for Palestine immediately or pass up the opportunity. Could that be true? he asked his mother. He would have preferred to have both visas in hand, the one from the United States, the other from Palestine, and be able to choose between them, rather than be forced to act on the first visa issued.

A key condition to the issuance of immigration documents from either country was the affidavit of support, a guarantee that if the applicant, once admitted, failed to become self-supporting, the signer of the affidavit would pay for the applicant's support and maintenance out of his own readily available funds. The affiant had to attach to the affidavit a letter from a bank or other financial institution, attesting that the affiant had sufficient funds on deposit to make good on his pledge of support. In that search for a friend or a relative prepared to put his own resources at risk to help his fellow-man, a man whose very life could be at stake often found out who his real friends were, whom he could rely on in this moment of dire need. Often, what were thought to be life-long friendships turned out in this process to have been built on a foundation of sand.

After much pressure, Paul Bonn and his wife, American friends of Grandfather's then living in Paris, agreed to submit an affidavit on Father's behalf. Their affidavit was rejected because, although their funds were in the U.S., the Bonns themselves were not. Father explained in a letter to his mother in Berlin that the American government would be unable to put the squeeze on them, as he put it, if our family needed their support and the Bonns refused to live up to their commitment. In the end, Father's cousin Frank Wolff, who had emigrated to the United States in 1928 with his parents and his brother, agreed to provide the necessary affidavit. On May 8, 1937, the Bankers' Trust Co. documented Frank's financial standing to the American Consulate in Rotterdam:

*We believe . . . that Mr. Wolff is comfortably well off and therefore is qualified to act as sponsor for his relatives so as to prevent them from becoming a public charge.*

Even when no commitment of financial resources was at stake, it could be difficult to obtain letters attesting to the visa applicant's good character. On December 26, 1936, Father wrote home that he was

*tired, depressed and angry. The only one who has responded to my request is Gamillscheg [the professor who chaired Father's doctoral committee and who twenty years later would support Mother in her request to the West German government for restitution]. Not a single Jew has deemed it important to answer.*

Attending to his own family's escape from Europe was more than enough responsibility for one man. The process could depress, confuse, frustrate and humiliate even the hardiest of souls, involving as it did a battle fought on two fronts: to gain clearance to leave the country in which one then resided and to obtain a visa from the country to which one intended to emigrate. Father had the added difficulty of securing permission from the French authorities to stay until he was ready to leave on his own terms.

Father's burdens were even more onerous because, at 28, he was the "substitute head-of-the-family" for those who still remained in Germany. In that role, Father had to guide and encourage them, help them maintain their optimism in the face of great difficulties, and advise them on the complex requirements for leaving that country. To obtain their visa for the United States, they had to go through the same ordeal that he had: the medical examinations, the fingerprinting, the letters of reference, and the affidavits of support and proof of financial responsibility.

Nazi Germany imposed still more daunting requirements on those seeking to escape. For herself and the two children still living with her, Gabrielle and Ernest, Grandmother had to satisfy all those requirements. She had to obtain clearances from the criminal justice authorities that there were no charges pending against her and from the civil authorities that there were no pending lawsuits or unsatisfied judgments against the family. Finally, they had to obtain permission to leave from the German taxing authorities. This required payment of the notorious *Reichsfluchtsteuer* (Flight Tax), a tax originally instituted by the Weimar government in 1931 to discourage capital flight. The Nazis, once they gained power, did their utmost to rid Germany of its Jews through punitive laws and downright thuggery. Then, when Jewish families, driven out by the Nazis, finally succeeded in their quest for exit documents and entrance visas, the Nazis confiscated their capital through the *Reichsfluchtsteuer*.

In all these complicated and time-consuming matters, my grandmother, Father's mother, relied heavily on her son, and he was there for her as he had always been. Grandfather could not help; he was in Paris, seeking to assemble the necessary documents for his own emigration to the United States, and he was in any case not a man who could be depended on to focus on legal issues such as these. It was left to Father to share his knowledge of immigration requirements with his mother and to act as a gadfly, prodding her constantly to attend to this, to see Dr. So-and-So for that, to send this letter here and that one there, and to go immediately to this *Amt* for a certain document and to this *Büro* for the other one.

In addition to her concerns in obtaining the necessary clearances from the Nazi authorities, Grandmother had to dispel suspicions that she was a foreign agent. My aunt Gabrielle recalled that, as a teenager, she accompanied her mother to Gestapo headquarters at No. 8 Prinz Albrechtstrasse in Berlin. Grandmother had been summoned there to explain why she was receiving so much mail bearing foreign postmarks. In that grim fortress-like building, where grisly torture was carried out in subterranean cells, Grandmother told the Gestapo that the letters were from her husband in Paris and from her son in Madrid. Much to Grandmother's relief, the Gestapo accepted that explanation and allowed her to leave without further harassment.

In January 1937, friends in Paris advised Father that the United States was "the only possible destination" and that he should go there first on a visit to "get the feel of the place." Acting on that advice, he obtained a tourist visa and embarked from Le Havre on the S.S. *Champlain* on February 1, 1937.<sup>50</sup>

After nine days at sea, the *Champlain* arrived in New York. Now Father had his first glimpse of the sights that until then he had seen only in photographs.

*We came to a dead stop [in Lower New York Bay off Sandy Hook] at 5:00 p.m. Nothing could be seen through the dense fog that enveloped us, but off in the distance you could hear a foghorn, then many more, all around us, and then you waited apprehensively to see what the next moment would bring. Like shadows, freighters moved past us; all you could see of them was the steam from their whistles. Finally, after a half hour of searching, moving and turning, the ship found its pilot boat. We were still in the open sea, but straight ahead lay the mouth of the Hudson*

[River]. Then the ship moved very carefully up into the harbor . . . One time, another ship passed us, frighteningly close by. After about two hours, the ship entered an area, no more than 200-300 meters wide, and after the ship had passed through these "Narrows," it entered Upper New York Bay. And all of a sudden the fog lifted, you could see lights on every shore, beacons, houses, parkways along the shore, cars. After still more time, you could see, brightly illuminated, the Statue of Liberty and then the skyscrapers [he calls them "cloud-scratchers"] of lower Manhattan, which I am sure are not as impressive by day as they are by night.

The ship continued for another half-hour up the river, and docked directly next to the "Europa." These docks are not quays as we know them, but closely resemble train stations. A small basin between the two piers, the buildings rising straight up out of the water. One leaves the ship directly onto the upper story of the pier, which is laid out like a train station. Ahead of us as we left the gangplank was Passport Control. You enter the waiting area, where several officials sit with their lists behind tables and busy themselves at length with the individual passengers. For me everything went smoothly; the official was friendly, and only asked me about my money, but didn't ask to see it. For others who were ahead of me in the line, it took forever. Finally, when the processing was finished, there were Tante Grete [Wolff] and [her son] Frank waiting for me, a warm, sincere welcome. Then (but now the time passed quickly because we were engrossed in conversation) a lengthy wait for my steamer trunk, and a very cursory inspection of its contents by a friendly Negro. Then the three of us were driven away from the pier by Uncle Herman's delightful chauffeur.

Father would remain in New York for the next three months, until early May 1937, taking lodgings at a rooming house on West 85th Street, just off Central Park West. In that time he was preoccupied with three matters that would be all-important to the family's well-being and success in the New World: to find a place to live for himself, his wife and their two sons, and another place for his parents; to lay the groundwork for his father's success as a lecturer at the New York Public Library; and finally (although this was strictly forbidden under the terms of his tourist visa) to line up a job for himself on his return.

Father soon realized that New York City and the surrounding area offered a wealth of housing choices, and that he would have the pleasant task of choosing from among these opportunities. Early on, he visited friends of Grete Wolff who had an apartment

high up in one of the towers on Central Park West, overlooking the park. He reported with amazement that the rent was only \$135.00 a month and that, in the same building, apartments on lower floors could be had for \$85.00! On Sunday drives with Tante Grete and Frank, he scouted out the close-in suburbs in Westchester and Long Island. He wrote home that all these little villages had main streets, “just like Sinclair Lewis’s novel [*Main Street*],” and that “they all look alike.” He quickly concluded, and informed his family, that it made no sense to live in the suburbs, because you had to rely on the trains to get into the city. He also advised against renting a house, because the costs couldn’t be controlled.

By mid-March 1937, after one month in America, he had decided on upper Manhattan as the neighborhood where he and his family, and his parents and siblings, would settle. Father had driven through the area on Sunday expeditions to Westchester with Tante Grete and Frank. Now he returned to it, and found it to be much superior to Forest Hills in Queens, the other neighborhood that he had considered. He gave his mother a full description of Inwood and the apartments to be had there:

*The neighborhood is better than Forest Hills, because it has the park, while Forest Hills has none, and in general it’s not as urban as Forest Hills. The apartments are all attractive, ready for immediate rental . . . I’ve tried to sketch out a typical floor plan for you. I would add the following: four large built-in closets. In the kitchen there are as many cabinets as there are walls, far too many for us. The radiators are all built-in as well, as are the light fixtures. Countless electrical outlets, and, for the radio, special outlets with ground and antenna!*

*In the bathrooms there are built-in hampers for the dirty clothes and ironing boards, such as we had in Madrid that can be made to fold up into the wall. The living room has no doors, and it is open to the whole apartment. Often the living room is “dropped,” that means it’s two steps down and offers the opportunity for a lockable wrought-iron gate. In the hall you can create a comfortable corner with a sofa, etc. The half-room could be your bedroom. The kitchen here, as elsewhere, has a white-enameled gas range with two roasting ovens, a Frigidaire and a two-section sink. The price is \$66.00. I’m describing it in such detail even though we won’t rent this particular apartment, because the others are similar. Sometimes they even have an extra showerbath. These are wonderful apartments, with the park directly across the street. And they are on a quiet street [Payson Avenue]*

*with no through traffic. In this neighborhood there are no five-room apartments, which is what the other part of the family needs (that includes the kitchen). But five or ten minutes away, at the most northerly end of Riverside Drive, you can easily find apartments of this size.*

Everything worked out as Father had envisioned it. Our first apartment, while not on Payson Avenue, would be one block to the east, on Seaman Avenue. A year later, we would move to a building on Payson, directly across from the park. "The rest of the family," my grandparents, indeed moved into one of those apartments "at the most northerly end of Riverside Drive." They would live there for the rest of their lives.

Even before his arrival here, Father had been leaning strongly towards pursuing emigration to the United States and not to Palestine. His visit to New York confirmed him in his sense that his future, and his family's, lay here. Visiting a family friend, Ernest ("E.") Mayer,<sup>51</sup> in New Rochelle, Father reviewed the pros and cons of Palestine and America. Father respected E. for his levelheaded approach to life's problems. Mayer urged Father to bring his family to the United States and Father was receptive to his prompting. In a letter dated March 4, 1937, Father explained his decision, once and for all:

*In favor of Palestine: we will forever be free of immigration difficulties [no one will expel them from the Jewish Homeland].*

*Against Palestine: (a) you will be coming into a country where civil unrest prevails;<sup>51</sup> (b) the family, and especially the children, would certainly be exposed to disagreeable illnesses; (c) I cannot count on getting a job in my profession or one similar to it; (d) the whole thing would put us through a very severe mental and emotional trial, one that we, I can safely say, have only recently emerged from; and (e) very important, to go to Palestine is to separate oneself forever from one's parents (one might see them every three years!)*

*In favor of America: (a) a considerable adjustment is not required; (b) I am told I will get a job, if not right away, then certainly within a couple of months, and there is money here which we can live off of, if that becomes necessary; and (c) the family is reunited again, with both material and spiritual advantages.*

The only negative about America, he said, were the visa difficulties, but this was only a question of perseverance in dealing

with the authorities. His conclusion: "I will try to come here, and hope by wintertime to lead a normal life."

How much of import rests in that simple statement of purpose! Father's decision affected irrevocably the remainder of his short life, his wife's and his children's. One can speculate whether, had he decided to move to Palestine, Father might have received better medical treatment in his final illness and might even have survived. That is doubtful, given the primitive quality of medical care in Palestine at that time. What is more certain is that, had we moved there instead of to the United States, the family would have suffered the extreme deprivation endured by Jews in Palestine during World War II. Benjamin and I would have been of age to serve in the Israel Defense Forces in the Suez Canal War of 1956 and the 1967 War as well and, had we survived, experience the years of trauma that have followed. Father made the right decision. We and our descendants will, we pray, forever reap the benefits from it.

Father's visit to New York coincided with the 500th birthday of R. Don Isaac ben Judah Abrabanel (1437-1508), one of the great Torah commentators of medieval Spain. To mark the occasion, Rabbi David de Sola Pool, rabbi of Congregation *Shearith Israel*, the Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue on Central Park West in New York City, invited Father to give a talk at the synagogue on the Jews of Spain in the 15th century. Among those attending was the Spanish ambassador to the United States, who greeted Father effusively, clapping him on both shoulders Spanish-style. Writing home after the event, Father reported that, at the reception that followed, he was introduced to members of the audience who told him how they admired his fluent English and how much they enjoyed his presentation. The Ambassador invited him to come to Washington and Rabbi de Sola Pool expressed the hope that he might someday return to *Shearith Israel* for another lecture.

One might think from reading of this "triumph" that any number of prestigious university positions were available to Father, like grapes on the vine, ripe for the taking. Not so. Although he wrote to his mother that employment opportunities were far greater than in Paris, he was unable to secure a permanent position during his visit to the States in the early months of 1937.

He quickly learned the realities of job-hunting here. Of another refugee, a Dr. Cohen, Father wrote that he was not cut out for life in America because, in Father's words, "you need elbows here."

Perhaps Father's job-hunting was frustrating because his elbows, too, weren't sharp enough.

One potential source of employment was the non-profit Committee on Displaced German Scholars. Father soon found out that this was a "completely senseless enterprise," having no interest in furnishing him with leads to positions in the academic world. "Instead," he wrote, "when a displaced German scholar finds a position on his own, he is expected to come across with a contribution to the organization." Moreover, Father had thought that, being German, displaced and a scholar, he would qualify for assistance from the Committee. Instead, he found out that the Committee could be of no help because, although he was a German national, he had not been displaced from a German university.

The same was true at the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), which provided financial assistance and job-placement advice to the new German-Jewish immigrants. Father was warmly welcomed there, but nothing concrete resulted. Since he was technically speaking a refugee from Spain and not from Germany, he found that he was "of no special interest to them."

His Spanish contacts were more helpful. He said of his warm welcome at the *Casa de las Españas* that, "With these Spaniards, as soon as you meet them, it's as though you had known them for years." A former colleague at the University of Madrid, Juan de Onis, suggested that Father contact the head of the Spanish Department at Brooklyn College, a Sephardic Jew. "That's how it is," he wrote. "Everyone says I'll find something eventually. Everyone has a letter of reference they're willing to write on my behalf. All I have to do is ask."

Unable to work at a salaried position, Father volunteered three mornings a week at the NCJW, translating letters and documents from German into English. That gave him ample time for job-hunting on weekdays and for weekend forays into the suburbs to locate suitable housing. There was time for more pleasant pursuits as well. On a visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Father admired its Spanish paintings,

*above all the wonderful painting of Toledo by El Greco, with the thunder-and-lightning clouds hovering over the hills of the city. This is the picture that we will always carry in our minds.*

He was less impressed with the Museum's musical instrument collection. It was poorly displayed

*in tall cabinets with piece upon piece crowded into them. In the middle of the hall is the collection of pianos, giving the impression of a railroad marshaling yard. Well, that will soon change for the better!*

His optimism stemmed from the assumption that Grandfather, on arriving in the United States, would be named director of the Museum's musical instrument collection. That did not happen and even today the collection is still not shown to its best advantage.

Another afternoon was spent at the Museum of the Hispanic Society on Wadsworth Terrace in Upper Manhattan. Admiring the museum's El Grecos, Riberas and Goyas and its sculptures and ceramics, Father admitted to a strong feeling of homesickness for Spain. "Who knows," he wrote, "maybe one day we'll go back there." Sadly, that was not to be.

Another destination was the top floor of 50 Rockefeller Plaza. Father wrote eloquently of the view:

*You see in front of you, below, the street patterns and the long [Central] Park, and how the red crosstown buses seem to crawl like ladybugs through the green cross-streets of the park. You see the elevated [subway line] creeping and the people teeming like insects. You see countless steamships, tugboats and ferryboats, all with their silvery wakes trailing behind, and the great ocean liners edging efficiently into their piers. You can even identify their flags. Opposite the tip of Manhattan lies the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island in the far off bay, and behind it you can just barely make out the Narrows and beyond it the open sea. You would certainly see it if the visibility were better. To the west, the silvery George Washington Bridge spans the Hudson, and across the river, as far as the eye can see, are little housing developments. Even Mother could handle this Observation Roof. It has a thick parapet and many chairs where you can sit and catch the sun's rays. I don't think anyone would get dizzy up here. Perhaps we can do it together some day.*

That too was not to be.

Finally, he sent back in a letter to Berlin his impressions of a weekend jaunt in early March 1937 to Jones Beach on the recently opened Southern State Parkway.

*The driving is delightful: the “speedways” are so convenient, they cross over other streets so you can drive for hours without having to stop. For most of the way, there are three lanes in each direction, with a median strip in between, and on each side is a landscaped “buffer-strip,” as they call it here. On either side of the highway are towns with subdivisions in the best Villenstil. Many golf courses with elegant clubhouses. Finally, we arrived at Jones Beach, a newly-developed beach on the Long Island shore. You can’t begin to imagine it—the broad approach branches off into parking lots where thousands and tens of thousands of cars can park. Even yesterday, a winter’s day, the lot was full . . . There is a central building with a heated swimming pool, with restaurant and café, tennis courts, shuffleboard courts, archery, now, in wintertime, everything is free. The cleanliness of everything is almost exaggerated. I saw a man reach down and pick up a cigarette butt and an apple core and put them into the trash-basket because he couldn’t stand to see them littering the ground. This beach, and for that matter the whole park and green space, children’s play area, the parkways, renewal and health are all thanks to Mr. [Robert] Moses. Everyone sings his praises.*

Father's visit to America enabled him to form quick impressions of American Jewry as well. On weekend excursions into Westchester County, he was surprised to find that each town had a synagogue. He had thought that Jews were concentrated in New York City, and so they were, but in the 1930's they had already spread into the Westchester, New Jersey and Long Island suburbs. This migration was taking place even as many suburban towns, such as Bronxville, were widely known to bar Jews as residents. Deeds to homes in these towns routinely included restrictive covenants prohibiting homeowners from selling their homes to Jews. Most of the elegant country clubs in Westchester excluded persons of the Jewish faith.

His introduction into American Judaism continued when he attended a Sunday morning service at a Reform temple near his lodgings. At that time, many Reform temples conducted their primary service on Sunday mornings in imitation of their Christian neighbors. The rabbi did not mince words or couch his message in euphemisms. His sermon sought to imbue his congregation with pride and self-respect as Jews, this at a time when the German-American Bund was openly holding anti-Semitic rallies in New York's public spaces and when the anti-Jewish rantings of Father Charles Coughlin could be heard on New York radio stations.

Father was so stirred by the rabbi's sermon that he reported on it in detail in a letter home in March 1937:

*The rabbi spoke about "Discrimination in beach resorts and shipping lines." Let me tell you, that was quite a powerful sermon. The problem is especially acute here. Bermuda has recently been closed to Jews, and whereas before it was unofficial, now it's official, with notices in the newspapers. It's no different in other places, and there are many ocean liners on which Jews can't book passage. The congregation was very interested. As in other synagogues in New York, the synagogue was full. It was an elegant crowd, as at the Fasanenstrasse Synagogue [in Berlin]. What is remarkable is how different in tone it is from Germany. Not a trace of assimilationism. [In English]: "If our Gentile friends want a ghetto of their own, let them have it." And there's no talk of a "Religionsstifter" [founder of a religion], but of "Christ" and instead of "Gentile friends" they use a far more Hebrew word [probably the word "goyim"]. The whole vocabulary is laced with German, Yiddish and Hebrew expressions, which the congregation with great enthusiasm recognizes and which seem to me quite strange in this setting, but which are apparently considered to be in absolutely good taste. The underlying message: None of us should imagine that he is not an Oriental: we have been wandering for 2,000 years, but we're still Orientals, even when we live on Park Avenue or Fifth Avenue and we're good Americans. Those who exclude themselves from the Jewish community and want to mix with their Gentile friends, and who feel called upon to say that one shouldn't always stay in the Judengasse [Jews' Lane], to them I would say: why should we not stay in the Judengasse? And then we should tell them how nice it is when Jews meet on a Sunday morning on Central Park West and say to each other, "How is mama, how is daddy, how is Rivke?"*

Throughout those trying months, Father expressed again and again in his letters to his mother in Berlin his love for her and his desire to be reunited with her and the rest of the family. He told her that her upbeat spirit in the face of adversity had always been her greatest strength. Now, he wrote, her cares are leaving visible wrinkles in her face, "like those of a railroad network." He spoke wistfully of past family vacations spent on seashores and says that he would like to be together with his mother again at such a place, adding with a fine irony that any body of water would be acceptable except the Wannsee (a lake in Potsdam, outside of Berlin). Father was prescient. Five years later, in January 1942, a villa on that same

lake would be the site of the infamous Wannsee Conference at which the Nazi leadership decided on extermination in death camps as the “Final Solution to the Jewish Problem.”

The ten months of rootlessness, first in Alicante and then in Paris, were not without their pleasures and triumphs for my parents, for my brother and for me. As Christian children believe in Santa Claus, Father told his sons to believe in the Chanukah Man, a kind man who goes unseen from house to house on Chanukah delivering toys for little Jewish children. On the first morning of Chanukah in 1936, the Chanukah Man delivered building blocks to me, sent by Grandmother from Berlin. The next morning the floor of the hotel room was covered with those blocks, set up end to end like a train.

While we were all living together at the Hotel St. Romain in Paris, Father had many “out-of-the-mouths-of babes” stories to pass on to the family in Berlin. He recounted that one night, while I was looking up intently at the starlit sky, there was a moment of silence and then I said, summing up, “*Siete*” [in Spanish, “seven”]. He explained that I had been trying to count the stars and that “*siete*” was as high as I could count at the time. My parents must have also told me that God was to be found in the clouds because, one day, as we were waiting for Grandfather at the train station, Mother asked me, “Who’s coming today?” Peering through the waiting room window, I looked up at the clouds and answered, in German, “*Der lieber Gott*” [“dear God”]. I found “*der lieber Gott*” in other places as well: in the steam coming out of a locomotive’s smokestack and in the condensation on a bathroom mirror.

The adults were also intrigued by my interest in words and by my comical combination of words from different languages in the same sentence. My great-grandmother Clara Lewin (my grandmother Irene’s mother) observed after a visit with us that I had “a high and somewhat singsong voice.” She continued: “He is definitely interested in speaking, repeats words which are new to him and applies them correctly.” Father had earlier noted that “you have to recite to [Daniel] all the words that he knows, and then he gets great enjoyment from repeating them to you.”

In those early years, while still acquiring speech, I spoke German sometimes, Spanish at other times, and sometimes a polyglot confusion of both. When my mother pushed me backwards into the tub to wet my hair before shampooing it, I resisted mightily, crying

out “*Agua rauf kopf no!*” In that short four-word sentence are two Spanish words, two German words.

For me, at age three, the short stay in Paris was a time of delight and not of trouble as it was for my parents. Father, when he was with us, and Grandfather showed me the sights of the city, or at least the neighborhood. In later years, I remembered feeding the doves and pigeons in the Tuileries Gardens, a block from our hotel, and watching other boys my age floating sailboats in the fountains. Perhaps it was the grandchildren of these boys who were engaged in this same activity on my visit to those gardens 57 years later. Grandfather also took me to see the *Pierrot et Pierrette* marionette show in the Tuileries. This centuries-old Paris tradition was still going strong when I returned to Paris in 1994.

While we were in Paris, Father brought my brother to a pediatrician for treatment of an ear infection and took me along. The pediatrician told Father that “the patient [my brother] is in excellent health” but that “this other child of yours,” pointing to me, “obviously has rickets.” Rickets is a bone disease caused by inadequate absorption of Vitamin D into the body because of lack of sunlight or because of inadequate intake of milk and other foods rich in Vitamin D. For two or three years after that, I was on a supplemental diet of calcium wafers and cod liver oil, which Mother would force into my mouth and down my throat over my vigorous protests and despite my urgent attempts to squirm out of her grasp. Many other children caught up in the chaos of the war years also had inadequate diets and exhibited similar nutritional deficiencies.

Father was still in New York, Mother with us in Paris on April 27, 1937, when warplanes of the Condor Legion, piloted by Germans, attacked the Republican stronghold of Guernica and other towns in the Basque country. Father and Mother had spent summers in Santander on the Cantabrian coast, some 50 miles from Guernica. The German Junker bombers first strafed refugees fleeing on the road to Bilbao, killing more than 800 of them. Then they dropped firebombs on the towns, utterly destroying them. The attack horrified my parents, as it did the civilized anti-Fascist world. Pablo Picasso commemorated the event in his famous painting, “Guernica,” all grays, blacks and whites, which hung for many years in the Museum of Modern Art in New York and is now on display at the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid.

With those events in Spain, Hitler's aggressive rearmament in Germany, the Italian war in Ethiopia and Japanese aggression in China, the world in 1937 was rushing headlong toward a renewal of the conflict which had seemingly ended in 1918. France and the other Great Powers girded for another war. I carried with me from my brief stay in Paris vivid memories of Bastille Day, July 14, 1937. Clusters of tiny tricolors, the French flag, flew from every lamppost. Grandfather and I watched the parade on the Rue de Rivoli. Standing amid the crush of spectators, he lifted me up onto his shoulders so that I could see the French soldiers in their helmets, gray greatcoats and full field packs, rifles on their shoulders, marching past us in ranks, the band playing *La Marseillaise*:

*Aux armes, citoyens! Formez vos bataillons!*  
*Marchons, marchons, qu'un sang impur,*  
*Abreuve nos sillons.*

Less than three years later, when Grandfather and I and the rest of the family had found refuge in America, many of those great-coated marchers would be dead, killed at the hands of the German invaders, others badly wounded or captured, while countless others would suffer that fate before the war ended.<sup>53</sup>

On May 13, 1937, Father returned from his visit to America. In June, the family came together for a brief reunion at Scheveningen, Holland, a North Sea beach resort. Great-grandmother Clara Lewin, Grandmother and Gabie came from Berlin; cousin Fritz Jaffe, visiting from Palestine, was also there. What pleasure it must have given the adults in the family to walk the beach there, watching the little ones, Benjamin and me, playing with our pails and shovels, and how painful the parting of those who would be leaving from those who were to stay behind, knowing in their hearts that they would not see each other again.

During our brief stay in Scheveningen, Father finally obtained the all-important immigration visa at the U.S. Consulate in Rotterdam. We were among the fortunate ones: so many other Jewish refugees applied for that precious document and were turned down, ultimately paying with their lives. Think of the S. S. *St. Louis*, that latter-day Flying Dutchman, prohibited from landing its Jewish passengers on American soil.

With the life-saving American visa in hand, we returned to Paris and from there took the boat train to Le Havre, the main port of

embarkation for ships of the French Line. On July 23, 1937, just short of six months after his first trip to the United States, we—Father, Mother, Benjamin and I—set sail for New York on the French Line’s S.S. *DeGrasse*. On the ship’s manifest, we were listed as passengers of German nationality and of the “Hebrew race or people.”

The next eight days on the Atlantic aboard the *DeGrasse* were not the leisurely interlude that Father’s earlier trip on the S.S. *Champlain* had been. Two days after his arrival in New York, he set down his impressions of the trip in a letter to Tante Grete, then vacationing in Italy:

*The DeGrasse seemed to us to be a bad trade; you can’t compare it to the Champlain and certainly not to the Île de France, but we soon felt better about it, because our tourist card entitled us to a first-class cabin, and because the steward, for a dollar tip, found a cabin for us with a private bath. That was truly priceless, especially because of the children.*

*The voyage was very strenuous for us. The children, and especially the wild little one [Benjamin], hung for ten days in the balance at the edge of a life-threatening precipice, and you couldn’t take your eyes off either of them even for a moment. The immediate proximity of the ship’s railing, the open steps, open hatches, the iron and steel machinery with the ever-present danger of getting a hand or other body part caught in them—all that made us sick with worry. Finally, we ransomed ourselves with a lost shoe that fell off the little one’s foot as he was leaning out over the ocean. That loss was easy to bear!*

*Only when the two of them were in bed could we breathe easily, and then we started having fun. Also on the ship was the Berlin rabbi [Joachim] Prinz, of whom you may have heard. He is not very rabbinical; I could converse with him easily, Leonie could dance with him well, and we took great pleasure in his company, but even more so in the company of his lovely wife. Both had been patients and close friends of Leo Landsberg,<sup>54</sup> so we had that in common as well.*

*We arrived in New York at night [on July 31, 1937], passing the fantastic illuminations of Coney Island. It was an unforgettable sight.*

After our arrival in America, my parents stayed in touch with Rabbi Prinz and his wife. They invited us, as fellow newcomers to these shores, to join them in their new home for our first Pesach in this country, in April 1938. How poignant and powerful must that first Seder in America have been for the adults at the table! There

was special meaning for these *flüchtlinge* (refugees) in the words from the Haggadah:

*In every generation, it is our duty to regard ourselves as if we personally had come out of Egypt, for it was not only our forefathers whom God set free from slavery . . .*

and there must have been many a tear-dimmed eye among the guests when they joined Rabbi Prinz and his wife in chanting:

*He brought us out from slavery to freedom, from sorrow to great joy. Sing unto the Lord a new song, Hallelujah!*<sup>55</sup>

At age four, I could not share in that potent mix of joy and sadness felt by the adults at the table. My mind was on other things:

*Seated next to me at the Seder table is Rabbi Prinz's daughter, Lucie, age 7. When the time comes for the hiding of the Afikomon, Rabbi Prinz hands her the matzoh. I watch with fascination, as if privy to a salacious secret, as the little girl lifts her dress and slips the matzoh in under the waistband of her panties, against her bare abdomen. It must have been uncomfortable for her during the meal, and amusing but unappetizing for the older guests when, at the conclusion of the Seder, she triumphantly produced the Matzoh from its hiding place.*

Rabbi Prinz, 35 years old when my parents met him on the S.S. *DeGrasse*, had been spiritual leader of Berlin's *Friedenstempel* synagogue.<sup>56</sup> As soon as the Nazis came to power, Prinz began to attack them as a threat to Jews and to world peace and urged his congregants to leave Germany. Years later, he remembered that his fiery sermons of those years were given in the presence of two plainclothes Gestapo agents seated in the front row. If his sermons were too incendiary, he was prohibited from preaching for a few weeks. If the prayers that he substituted for the sermons hit too close to home, the Gestapo agents barred those prayers, too. Finally, in July 1937, the Gestapo quieted him altogether, ordering him to leave Germany immediately.

Prinz was not one to preach Torah and Talmud when the more direct approach was called for. In his final sermon, he told his Berlin congregation:

*Many of you really don't know what time it is now. Many of you live as if nothing is happening. But I am telling you that the hour is midnight. You have to look at the clock and understand what it is telling you. At midnight,*

*people must pack and go, for it may well be that they will never have the opportunity to look at the clock again.*<sup>57</sup>

In those years, rabbis in every city, town and village across Germany were preparing their departure, as Rabbi Prinz was, and bidding farewell to their congregants. Many rabbis had already left, some were preparing to leave; others could not leave or had decided to “stick it out.” For a rabbi, like the captain of a ship, it must have been an especially weighty and heart-wrenching decision to pull up anchor on his own and set sail for another port, without feeling keen remorse at abandoning his congregants. Many rabbis during that time faced that dilemma. Most of them counseled from their pulpits that it was folly to stay; others “went down with the ship,” so to speak, leading their congregants into the concentration camps. One who refused to leave was Rabbi Leo Baeck, the highly-respected leader of German Jewry. He had already in 1933, at the very outset of the Nazi years, foreseen the end of the 1,000-year history of the Jews in Germany. Offered the opportunity in 1939 to emigrate, he turned it down, saying, “I will go when I am the last Jew alive in Germany.” During the war years he was interned at Theresienstadt, and survived.<sup>58</sup>

On arriving in this country, Rabbi Prinz found a new home as leader of Newark’s B’nai Abraham synagogue. He also served as president of the American Jewish Congress and the World Jewish Congress.<sup>59</sup> In that capacity, Rabbi Prinz was on the dais with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and clergymen of other faiths at the rally for jobs and equality held on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on August 28, 1963. In his speech, immediately preceding Dr. King’s, Rabbi Prinz reminded the multitude that

*our ancient history began with slavery and the yearning for freedom. During the Middle Ages, my people lived for a thousand years in the ghettos of Europe. Our modern history began with a proclamation of emancipation.*<sup>60</sup>

Who today, fifty years later, remembers these words? Who, in truth, paid attention to them then, when we were all eagerly awaiting Dr. King’s words? Nevertheless, Rabbi Prinz’s speech was a powerful reminder that the virus of racism can spread easily to harm not only African-Americans but Jews and other minorities as well.

On that morning on July 31, 1937 when the *S.S. DeGrasse* dropped anchor at the Quarantine Station in Lower New York Bay, we were examined by government physicians, received our health clearance, and passed through Customs, all without having yet set foot on American soil. Unlike so many other refugees, including Grandmother and her two youngest children, we were not diverted to Ellis Island and quarantined there.

As the early morning mists cleared on the following day, August 1, 1937, the *S.S. DeGrasse* steamed through the Narrows and entered Upper New York Bay. As the ship proceeded upriver, our family, along with the other passengers, crowded against the rail, gazing in awe at the looming Manhattan skyline. Tugboats nudged, pushed and pulled the *DeGrasse* into her berth next to other ocean liners. Waiting to debark with the other passengers was Mother, then 29, Father, 28, my brother, 17 months old, and I, 3 years old.

We can imagine the newcomers' thoughts as they strained to catch their first glimpse of the loved ones who were at the pier to meet them. There was, first and foremost, relief that they had overcome the hardships they had had to face in gaining permission to leave Germany and enter this country, and gratitude for their newfound freedom from the fears that had gnawed at them daily in Nazi Germany.

*On the ship, one refugee said, "Alles ist vergessen. Nazis und Abstreibung. Es ist der Anfang der Wiedermenschung. [Everything is behind us, the Nazis and our forced departure. It is the beginning of our becoming human again]."*<sup>61</sup>

At the same time the refugees could not forget those whom they had left behind, nor could they put aside an intense trepidation over their fate. In addition, they had to cope with the confusion and uncertainty over what lay ahead. They might know where they would be sleeping that night, but where would they find a permanent home? Where would they find work and, most important, how long would it be before they would be on their feet financially in these new surroundings? Our family shared those feelings of relief, gratitude and uncertainty with the other German Jewish immigrants on the *DeGrasse*. They were the feelings of the millions of immigrants who had arrived as free men and women on America's shores since its earliest years, and for German Jews since they had begun to arrive in large numbers in the 1840's.

Our family was part of the newest wave of immigrants, Jews from Germany and elsewhere in Europe driven out of their homeland by the looming menace of Nazism in Germany. Between 1933 and 1940, some 370,000 Jews left Germany. Of these, 200,000 headed for Palestine; the bulk of the others escaped to America.

As much as we had in common with earlier waves of immigrants, there were important differences too. One associates the immigrant experience as it has passed into American history and folklore with the mass immigrations between 1880 and 1920 of Jews from Eastern Europe. They came to this *goldene medinah* (the golden land), as they called it, to avoid having sons impressed into service with the Czar's armies, or to escape death from pogroms or a desperately bleak future in their native land. They came to America by the hundreds of thousands in those years, sometimes only with the clothes on their backs and a few possessions tied in a blanket. They might have brought with them a few treasured heirlooms from the Old World—the family Bible, or a set of Shabbos candles handed down from grandmother to mother to daughter. In the father's pocket would be a letter, stained and crumpled from having been read and re-read, from a brother or cousin in New York, Chicago or other cities and towns across America, telling of the limitless opportunities for hardworking men in their communities.

When we think of those immigrants, the image that comes to mind is of steerage passengers newly arrived in America, of Alfred Steiglitz's 1915 photographs of exotic-looking and ill-clothed men, women and children looking warily up at the camera, or other photos of bewildered mothers and frightened children being examined on Ellis Island by a Public Health Service doctor and a nurse in a starched white uniform.

It suits our myth-making to focus on those throngs of turn-of-the-century immigrants who left the old country, a land that offered nothing but pain, misery and lack of opportunity, to come to America, a land of plenty and boundless opportunity. There is no room in that myth for families like mine, who were well-educated, held respectable jobs and had before them the prospect of a lifetime of achievements, had not Hitler intervened. The German Jews who arrived in America in the 1930's

*were certainly not the 'huddled masses' of Emma Lazarus's famous poem. Few American immigrant groups have been described in such elite terms as the German refugees of the 1930's.*<sup>62</sup>

My family was not among those who came to America carrying only what they could fit into a battered suitcase, a cardboard carton or a bundle. In the hold of the ship when my Grandmother arrived in America were ocean-going lifts, carefully packed by a leading Berlin mover, carrying almost the entire contents of the family house on Lichtenstein Allée.<sup>63</sup> Of material possessions, little was left behind, but in the way of intangibles a great deal—*die alte Heimat* (the old homeland) and the German *Kultur* that had been hijacked by Hitler and his thugs.

There were other differences as well. On arriving in this country, the immigrants of myth often moved into miserable tenements, scratching out a soul-eroding existence in a sweat shop, a coal mine or a steel mill. They often thought of themselves as sacrificing their own lives so that their children and grandchildren might have a better life. In contrast, my grandparents and parents had credentials that, even before their departure from Europe, made them desirable members of the academic community in America. Grandfather had been assured of teaching opportunities while still in Paris. For Father, it was more difficult, but there was no doubt that, with his excellent references and letters of recommendation, he would find a teaching position suited to his qualifications. Not every immigrant arriving in this country carried with him, as Father did, a letter of recommendation to Dr. Louis Ginzberg of the Jewish Theological Seminary, or one written by Prof. Harold Laski of the London School of Economics. Not every refugee family had in its dossier, as ours did, a letter from Anne Morgan, daughter of the financier J. P. Morgan, pressing the American Consulate in Berlin to issue a visa on its behalf.

Earlier immigrants spoke little or no English on arriving in this country. Many of that generation never learned English, speaking only Yiddish to their children and their contemporaries. Having studied English since the early years of grade school, my family spoke it well even before their arrival, and what they did not know they picked up quickly. Grandfather was teaching in English within a month after his arrival, and everyone commented on his command of the language. Father too, as we have seen, was giving

lectures in English shortly after his arrival in America. Likewise, Grandmother, while on Ellis Island, was complimented by the immigration officials on her English. Finally, the Sachs family and most other German-Jewish refugees with the means to do so steered clear of the old-law tenements on the Lower East Side and moved directly into apartments that were as elegant as the dwellings that they had abandoned in Germany.

Contrasting the Jewish immigrants of the earlier generations with the German-Jewish immigrants of the 1930's, Professor Steven Lowenstein says that the earlier immigrants

*came primarily for economic reasons, were mainly lower class or middle class, and usually had an elementary school education or less. Most came from small towns, tended to concentrate in immigrant colonies, had a low standard of living and learned English slowly. The refugees from Nazi Germany were quite different. They were mainly of middle-class or upper-class origins and were engaged primarily in business, professional or white-collar occupations. They came chiefly from the cities and were well-educated. They tended not to concentrate in immigrant centers, had a high standard of living and [merged] quickly into the mainstream of American life.<sup>64</sup>*

For all their advantages in the struggle to escape Nazi Germany and find freedom here, my family and other German-Jewish refugees carried burdens that did not impede earlier generations of immigrants. As one writer said,

*They are unable to forget that they are German and they can't lose their German-ness. They are like snails that must carry two shells on their backs.<sup>65</sup>*

That's how it was for the Sachs family as well. We were not among those immigrants who, on arriving on these shores, hastened to put their past behind them. How often have I heard my contemporaries say, "My grandparents never spoke of the old country. When I asked them about it, they clammed up." No, it was quite the other way in our family, at least on my Father's side. In passing on the stories of their life in pre-Hitler Germany, my grandmother seemed to be telling me that this mattered, that we mattered, and that I, as the first-born in my generation, mattered. I might play and learn among children of other cultures, even among other Jewish children, but I was not one of them, even though, objectively speaking, in our clothes, in our home environment, and

so on, we were no different; indeed, we were, certainly in economic terms, at a disadvantage. This sense of self-worth which Grandmother inculcated in me has been both a great boon and a detriment throughout my life.

Read seventy-five years after the event, with knowledge of its outcome, the story of our flight from Europe lacks suspense and dramatic tension. Our understandable reaction to it is that of the host at a dinner party, listening to a guest describe a life-threatening situation. We respond calmly, without concern, knowing by his presence at the table that the narrator has survived to tell the tale. Just so, our escape story had a happy ending with our safe arrival in America, all doubts removed, all fears allayed. But for much of the *Fluchthjahre*—our year-of-flight—that outcome was not at all clear. There must have been many sleepless nights spent in anguish over the family's future and over the danger to loved ones. It must have been terribly disturbing to know that the outcome would be determined through a seemingly inscrutable process by faceless persons over whom my parents had no control and who might be indifferent or even hostile to their efforts to escape.

My parents' safe arrival in America meant survival, to be sure, but, more than that, it opened up the possibility of living once again the normal life that they had known as young newlyweds, first in Germany and then in Spain. On November 19, 1936, two weeks after her arrival in Paris, Mother wrote plaintively:

*I have to admit that I cannot endure our fate as well as I thought I would. I am absolutely not indifferent that, for the time being and for the indefinite future, we must travel from pillar to post around the world with the children . . . I have to confess as well that, at this time of all times, I have very worldly desires, wanting to dress nicely and be among people, go to concerts and museums, to be young and not pregnant.*

Our arrival in America put an end to our pillar-to-post wanderings, but it did not follow that Mother's worldly desires were now to be gratified. With our safe arrival in America, Fortune's wheel was at its zenith. Now the wheel would once again begin its downward turn. Only in the last decades of her life would Mother again have the means to live the financially-comfortable life that she craved.

3

THE FAMILY  
REUNITED

Two months after our ship docked at the North River pier and we began our life in America, the remainder of the family—Grandmother, Gabie and Ernest—landed on these shores. It wasn't as easy for them as it had been for us. But let Grandmother tell the story of her first days in America, as she did in a letter to her mother, Clara Lewin. The English translation from the German original follows:

U.S. Emigration [sic] Station  
Ellis Island, New York, October 6 [1937]

Dearest Mama:

For the time being, we have not really arrived. Instead of being at the Hotel Paris [where Grandfather was staying], or 20 Seaman Avenue [where her son and his family were living], we are sitting—in Ellis Island. It's not bad, it's just that we're not accustomed to it and it is somewhat monotonous, and now I'll tell you how it all came about. This interlude began at the American Consulate on Bellevuestrasse [in Berlin, where the three of them had undergone a physical examination by the Consulate physician]. Here's my story:

The ship *Île de France* entered the Narrows. Everything that was ever said or written about the fairytale beauty of Manhattan at night can't begin to do justice to what we saw. The flood of light, those huge illuminations, are indescribable. Ernie, who had made a study of the layout of downtown

Manhattan, could point out all the buildings by name and, farther, much farther up the Hudson, where the lights are dimmer, he indicated that that's where the last house on Riverside Drive [the house where they were to live] should be. The piers are not like those in Amsterdam or Hamburg. They are huge and surprisingly well laid-out.

Next to the *Queen Mary*, the *Île de France* pulled in, or rather was pushed, pulled and prodded into its berth by little tugboats, to the accompaniment of loud groans and whistles. The main hall of the pier was very crowded. Since George had told us ahead of time where he would be standing, and since Gabie and Ernie combined to sound our family whistle, we found each other immediately. The great joy of our reunion had to be put on hold, because we still had to go through Visa Control. In the dining room [of the ship] there was a crazed sort of activity, very hectic, with the showing of numbers and visas. We had previously noticed the doctor's letter attached to Ernie's visa, but had tried to subdue the fear that this brought with it. Seeing the knowing smile of one of the officials, our fears go up a few notches. The heat is stifling—and we are wearing winter coats and hats!

Finally, we are called before a fine-looking officer in uniform. There are a few short questions. Next to him stands a man identified by a sign as an official of the HIAS [Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society]. He says to me, "*Können sie verstehen was er hat gesagt?*" ["Could you understand what he just said?"] The fine officer smiles at us and compliments us on our fine English. We wait some more. The ship's dining room is almost empty. Finally, we are told that Curt may come on board. We wait and wait. The officer speaks to him. Nothing can be done: we must go to Ellis Island. The doctor's letter attached to Ernie's visa has to be checked out. The officer is very polite but tells us he has no say in the matter; the highest authority will have the last word. The HIAS gentleman takes our little group aside and says that, since we seem to be such "nice people," he will make an exception and allow George to see us. In return, we must promise not to speak to the officer again. A young woman joins the HIAS men. She represents another immigrant aid society. When she speaks to us, hope and courage return.

All these people know each other, know about each other. The French would say, "*C'est la chaîne*" [it's the chain]—I would call it, "*la chaîne Juive*" [the Jewish chain], and what a solid and dependable chain it is! The young woman knew about George, and when he came on board with Leonie, who had been waiting on the pier, we spent a not exactly *gemütliche* time together, but we began to resign ourselves to reality.

The wonderful young woman bade us goodbye and promised to be back in the morning for our ferry ride, and Curt and George could also be there. So ended out first evening in New York. No, actually not. We had to return to our cabin one more time. By this time, the ship's crew was already in their bedclothes. Hurriedly, our beds were remade and we "prisoners" bedded down for one more night on the good ship *Île de France*.

In the adjoining cabin, the stewards stood guard over us, because every "escapee" costs the French Line a 3,000-franc penalty. It was unbearably hot in the cabin—the ventilation had been shut down, and all this made us feel physically and mentally a little crushed. Ernie did not say much; he was agitated and unhappy. In spite of all this, we finally fell asleep, the children sleeping soundly until the next morning.

Our toilette was accomplished with a handkerchief and a bit of leftover Yardley [soap], as our luggage had already been off-loaded onto land. Breakfast was served in the next cabin as it had a window: stale coffee, bread and butter. With breakfast finished, we—quite frankly in good and rested condition—were escorted by our nice steward through the ship towards the bridge, where we were handed over to the authorities. Next thing you know, we are standing in the huge baggage hall of the French Line pier, together with a mob of third-class passengers: old, old, unbelievably greasy-looking old men, for whom chairs had to be brought, mothers with babies and tired little children. Each piece of baggage was searched by the Customs agents, although superficially. I could not see our larger pieces at first, until I saw them peeking out through the tattered cardboard which [the Berlin movers] had so carefully wrapped them in. At least they were safe and sound.

Finally, everything was stamped that needed to be stamped, everything was loaded on, we were constantly subjected to a head-count. Taxis came by, we were stuffed into them, accompanied by the police, as we rode with breakneck speed toward the southern tip of Manhattan. To our right were the piers which we had viewed in such high spirits only the afternoon before, on our left the skyscrapers of Manhattan, and all this in the stifling heat of an autumn morning.

The taxi stopped at Battery Park, where a ferry awaited us, our dear family already on board. During the whole trip we were constantly under the watchful eyes of the officials. Then we stepped from the ferry onto Ellis Island, but Curt and George were not allowed to go where we were taken.

Here now is a description of the Great Hall [at Ellis Island], in which the drama of the detainees is played out. The Hall resembles a small railroad station, tiled in white, with immense windows along the front wall. From these windows one sees Manhattan and the Hudson River and all the ships with their mournful tooting and whistling. Surrounding the entire Hall is a gallery giving access to the sleeping areas.

After we had been sitting and waiting for about a half-hour, our Ernie was suddenly called away. We presumed it was for a medical examination. Instead, he was taken to the Ellis Island hospital, dressed in an institutional garment with "USA Ellis Island" stenciled on it, and admitted to a ward of twenty beds, of which 12 were occupied. Many hours later we were allowed to visit him, always under the watchful eye of an official. From his bed, he has a view of the harbor and the Statue of Liberty which, I must confess, I find less beautiful than I had expected.

Ernie's existence here is not exactly ideal, but he is unbelievably good-natured about it. Some day he will write about his wardmates: the old Malayan who, with his beautiful fine hands, works in woolen crafts, and the young Chinese boy. When we visited, the doctor, who is very nice and friendly, as are most of the staff of this island, was here for a preliminary visit. But the real examination was to take place later. Curt and George were not permitted to visit him and we, Gabie and I, could spend only a very little time with him.

In the meantime, you dear one, with your clever instincts, smart as you are, will have gathered that we are under lock and key, just prisoners, although one must admit that some effort has been made to gild this prison. The Hall is divided into "rooms," simply by the placement of benches and tables. There is the writing room, and reading room with large comfortable chairs, and the sewing room, where Oriental and black women are working in fabrics. Besides, there is table tennis and the little balls fly through the Hall and land somewhere with a delicate "click."

A call to lunch is sounded—the inmates make a wild dash towards the dining room. Everyone is counted again. "Are you Jewish? The kosher table is on your left." The meal is served on a well-laid table. Chicken soup, matzoh balls, stuffed cabbage with potatoes, applesauce, large pots of coffee and tea, sugar cubes wrapped in paper. Everywhere there is exemplary cleanliness—more than that, even a little beauty. The wall in front of us is decorated with new modern frescoes. The view out the windows would be lovely if they weren't barred. Between-meal snacks are served in the Great Hall. Everybody has to be seated on one of the benches. A man in a white uniform pours milk from a shiny pitcher into paper cups. The crackers have no taste.

The fact is that we have to stay here as long as Ernie is here. One hopes that by morning he'll be free to leave, when the X-rays come back negative. Nobody seems to know anything, and no organization can intervene. Actually, nothing terrible can happen—no one would send us back, but it could still take a while. Sometimes, a small melancholy overtakes us, when we think about today being your birthday, and that today is Curt's first college lecture, which he had purposely scheduled so that I would be able to attend it, and also because today should have been our first full day in New York, when all of us were to be gathered in one joyful family reunion. But, if you could see Gabie playing rummy with a Negro, an Oriental and another man with rolled-up shirtsleeves, you would see that, putting our bourgeois instincts aside for a while, one can be cheerful for an hour at a time, anyway.

We are told that, at 6:30 p.m., we are required to report to our dormitories, with lights out at 10:00 p.m. and the doors locked from the outside. Wake-up is at 6:00 a.m. We have not yet experienced this routine ourselves. The toilets here are built in such a way that, when you are seated, your calves are visible, probably like the toilets in any prison. Now you should see Gabie explaining a new card game in her best English, and I can see from where I sit that her partner's eyes are glued to her with delight.

Mother dear, there are plants here of exceptional beauty: luscious rubber plants, a gorgeous agave, all well-tended, and from up above hang two Union Jacks [?], pretty flags.

7:30 p.m. We are called. Everyone rushes toward some iron racks against one wall where the clothing is kept. We had previously received permission to pick some things out of our luggage. Gabie chose well, so that each of us had some nightclothes and some toiletries. When everyone has their bundle, they file upstairs to the first landing, where a man reaches into a bucket and hands out a little white item. I thought it was a "treat," and was about to refuse it, when I realized it was a tiny bar of soap.

Once we get to the gallery level, the matron decides who will room with whom. We were in luck! One of our roommates was a Hungarian lady, very clean and lady-like, the other a dark-eyed Creole. A voluptuous Carmen, with her child, both of them film star material, if only someone would discover them. The matron pointed to our "bedroom," a large room with once-white bedsteads, which had rusted to a dark brown with the passing of time. High above, the barred window through which it would be impossible to escape due to a steeply slanting windowsill. The matron asked if we wanted to take baths in which we could stand or squat for a quick wash-up. Except for a suspicious-looking bath stool there was no place to hang or place anything. We helped each other the best way we could. We emerged from the baths in our nightclothes, paper cup for toothbrushing in hand, and had to pass by several male employees on our way to bed. At ten o'clock sharp, the lights were turned out and the door locked.<sup>66</sup>

The next letter, written two days later:

Hotel Paris [New York],  
October 8, 1937

Dearest Mother, from the change of stationery you can see that we have been set free. Everything changed for the better with the speed of lightning, or so it seems now, and here I am, on the 20th floor of the Hotel Paris, sitting at a real desk, writing to you. From where I sit I can see the cars pass by far below, in the shadow created by these enormous buildings, and I can see the blue Hudson, with the factories on the other side, and beyond a string of houses in New Jersey. Not a cloud in the sky, a gentle breeze wafts through the open window. This must be their Indian summer—everything is beautiful.

First, I have to finish my story. We slept poorly, because the ships and tugboats pass by from 3:00 a.m. on, giving out toots and whistles, a cacophony of howling and other frightening sounds. It was almost as if we were in Hamburg again, sleeping in *Alte Rabenstrasse* [the street in Hamburg where Clara Lewin was raised] and having to hear again all the sounds from the harbor. All night long, a little child was coughing and crying. We were almost done getting dressed and freshening up when we heard a key turning in the door. It was the matron calling out, "Morning, hurry up." We were gathered up and led downstairs to breakfast: porridge, milk, sugar, coffee, prunes and that magnificent white bread that astounded us; I almost begrudge it to myself. At 8:00 a.m. it was time for a walk around the prison yard. Although it was actually pleasant to walk back and forth near the water with a view of the Statute of Liberty, our pleasure was dimmed by the sight of the poor criminal prisoners, soon to be deported, who had this view only from their barred windows, and of course we were also mindful of our own depressing condition of being captives on the island.

Shortly after 9:00 a.m., we were permitted to call Leonie; she told us that George was already on his way to us. In the phone booth, I saw my first cockroach—now we were definitely ready to leave the island! Just as our patience

began to wear a little thin, Ernie reappeared, grinning happily. He had had his examination the day before and knew that he would be released the following day. It turned out that they were examining his heart and not his lungs, and after a half-hour test he was free. The doctor was Jewish, as were a great number of the staff. There was great delight all around, with the staff joining in our joy and wishing us well. At 10 o'clock we were called to a hearing in a handsome courtroom. On a slightly raised platform were three uniformed officials: the presiding officer, in the center, solemn and ceremonial, the one on the left, looking grim, and the one on the right, definitely good-natured. With our visas in hand, the hearing proceeded. Since we had always been truthful, and because our statements in Berlin were the same ones we were making here and now, we were allowed to sit down. The stenographer took down all the information.

And then, another wonder. The most good-natured of all men, a really lovely black man, rushed to a side door and led George to the witness stand. We knew that he had planned to make the crossing on the ten o'clock ferry, but that he came just at the right time, when we needed him as a witness, that was our good fortune. The fact that he was carrying his papers and (by chance) his bankbook, helped to speed up the proceedings, so ten minutes later we were declared lawfully-admitted immigrants. It was a wonderful feeling!

And then we were allowed to gather up our baggage from the basement, and we sat in the sun waiting for the next ferry to take us to Battery Park, where Curt stood ready and waiting.

And so begins our *entrance into NY life* [so in original].

## THE LOSS OF THE FATHER

Grandmother, Ernie and Gabie had finally cleared Immigration. The ferry from Ellis Island had deposited them again in Manhattan, this time for good, to join Grandfather and my parents here. Our family had escaped the turmoil in Europe and landed safely on America's shores. Father led his parents to the apartment he had leased for them at 1781 Riverside Drive in Manhattan. We were reunited as a family.

The story might have ended there, the grateful family having escaped the Nazi juggernaut and on its way to normalcy here in America. But, sadly, tragically, it was not to be.

Father had obtained a job at a meager salary at the Joint Distribution Committee, familiarly referred to as "the Joint." Its director was Kurt Blumenfeld, a longtime Zionist who had been head of the Zionist Federation for Germany. The Joint was charged with enabling Jews to escape from Europe. It also gave financial support to Jewish organizations and to Jewish individuals until they could emigrate. In his job at the Joint, Father would have read the heartrending appeals for assistance from community leaders, rabbis and individuals, begging for letters of reference, for money, for support. He knew at first-hand, and from those letters, how desperate was the situation for the Jews of Germany and other European countries. It must have been emotionally and physically taxing for Father to read those appeals and be unable to respond to the enormity of the need.

Perhaps it was through his work at the Joint that Father quickly learned how to pull the levers of power in America. One can see from Father's letters that, although he had been in the United States

for less than two years, he understood the techniques of grass roots organizing and the value of public protest against the barriers that the Western Powers were erecting to the entry of Jews into their lands. In October 1938, the British government threatened to revoke the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which had promised world Jewry a national homeland in Palestine, and to place drastic limits on the number of Jews who could enter Palestine. An activist on behalf of the stateless refugees, Father sent a telegram to Cordell Hull, the American Secretary of State, urging him to “take firm stand against threatening revocation of Balfour Declaration by British government treacherously depriving Jews of re-built homeland.” Having received an academic appointment at Columbia University earlier that year, Father signed the telegram with his university affiliation, explaining to his cousins in Palestine that “in this connection the affiliation is very beneficial.” He drafted a similar telegram for Grandfather’s signature as well. Demonstrating his understanding of the impact of grass roots protest on public officials, he commented to his cousins that “the wording of the individual telegrams doesn’t matter; it’s the quantity that counts.”

On his return to New York in August 1937, Father continued to find it difficult, as he had during his visit earlier that year, to re-establish in New York the academic career for which he was so highly qualified. There was no doubt of his ability to master the English language and no question of his scholarly attainments in his field. But perhaps that was exactly the point; those who were entrenched in their departments zealously protected their positions and sought to exclude any newcomer who might threaten their place in the academic firmament. Father, though, had his “pull” and did not hesitate to use it. Dr. Ramon Menendez Pidal, Father’s mentor at the University of Madrid, had escaped before Madrid fell to the Franco forces and had secured an appointment at Columbia University’s Department of Romance Languages. While a tenure track appointment continued to elude Father, Menendez Pidal had interceded on his behalf to secure a post-doctoral research fellowship for Father at a stipend of \$1,500. That stipend, together with his meager earnings from translating documents and correspondence for various refugee agencies, still did not add up to an income much above poverty level even in those post-Depression years.

Finally, in January 1938, Father was notified that he had been appointed an Associate Professor at Columbia University's Department of Romance Languages, effective February 1. In a letter to his cousins in Palestine, he remarks dryly on the months of struggle and maneuvering that were necessary before he could achieve this long-sought goal.

*Yesterday I was appointed as associate professor at Columbia for one year, starting February 1. I've been fighting for it for almost a year. Actually, I have been sure of the appointment since last February, but the money hasn't been there to pay me, and only now, after endless difficulties, has funding been secured through some Jewish source.<sup>67</sup> Financially it's no improvement for us, because it means I have to drop all my other income-producing activities [i.e. the translation of documents], but it is of course a big prestige-gainer for me, and now I have for the first time in this country a real base of operations. You can imagine how happy we all are. This year, until the summer anyway, I have no teaching duties and I'm pleased about that. I'll be tied up in the meantime primarily with overseeing a new edition of Revista Sefárdica, an activity that I've worked on previously [in Spain] and that has given me great pleasure. Other than that, no firm plans. Eventually, I'll be advising doctoral candidates on their dissertations and conduct some bibliographical research as well.*

At the same time, we were relocating from the restrictive confines of that room on West 85th Street, where Father had stayed during his earlier visit, to an apartment at 20 Seaman Avenue in Inwood. The new apartment was only four blocks from the apartment that Father had rented for his parents on Riverside Drive. It offered more abundant sunlight and fresh air than the narrow streets of Manhattan's West Side; it was but a block from Inwood Hill Park and Fort Tryon Park and the playgrounds there; and living nearby were several friends whom my parents had known in Berlin. It was, all in all, a far better place to raise the two boys.

A few months later, in October 1938, we moved again, this time to 55 Payson Avenue, a building that backed directly onto the one at 20 Seaman where we had been living. In fact, the two buildings shared a passageway leading from the sidewalks to their respective basements and boiler rooms. The new apartment was larger than the one on Seaman Avenue. It also had in its favor the pleasant view onto Inwood Hill Park and the cooling westerly breezes wafting in from the Hudson River.

Just two months after our move, I stood at our living room window in the Payson Avenue apartment and looked out to the park across the street. There, just to the left of the entryway into the park, fallen brown oak leaves, driven by the chill December wind, whirled in a tight eddy. Watching the spinning leaves, I stood as if in a trance, understanding somehow, or believing, that they were the harbinger of the snows to come. Sure enough, the first snowflakes fell moments later, dampening the leaves and bringing them to rest, as a merry-go-round comes to rest when the calliope music ends. Sometime later, when I returned to the window, I saw that a light snow now covered the slides and seesaws in the playground. For many years, I was convinced that the swirling leaves and the first snow of winter were cause and effect, that the first snows would not fall unless the leaves had first spun around in that fashion.

Before the trees would bud again the following spring, Father would feel the first pains in his abdomen that presaged appendicitis and impending death. Four months after that first snow, my young life itself began to swirl in a dizzying eddy, as those leaves in the park had done, and seven months later, Father, the hub of my universe, was dead. I had just turned five some five months earlier; Ben was three.

How brief the time that Father and I were together in this life, how few the memories! But there were, at least, those few:

— Father and I at the American Museum of Natural History, I on his shoulders, as we together navigate the showcases displaying the Museum's precious gem collection;

— Father and I on an outing to the Bronx Zoo. At 207th Street and Tenth Avenue, the western end of the line, we catch one of the old Fordham Road crosstown trolleys, red and gold, the sides open to admit the vagrant summer breezes in the days before air-conditioning. Once we are on the trolley, it rattles across the 207th Street Bridge and uphill, crossing Jerome Avenue and the Grand Concourse, and continues eastward to the zoo. Inside the zoo, we stand side by side, father and son, and admire a peacock sheathed in feathers, white and royal blue, strutting back and forth in his small enclosure. As we face him, the peacock turns to face us and, as if we were the object of his affections, spreads out his magnificent tail plumage in a fan of silver and iridescent greens and blues.

— I sit on Father's lap while he, reaching around me, scratches an Aleph (the Hebrew letter A) onto the block of polished marble that had been great-grandfather Lewin's.

— Together, we read G. H. von Schubert's *Tierreich* ("The Animal Kingdom") (1886), a folio of color paintings of various animals and fish, I, four years old, agog at the more violent illustrations: the crocodile on the banks of the Nile, holding in its gaping jaws a man who flails helplessly to avoid the fate that awaits him; the narwhal thrusting its lance-like nose into the hull of a whaleboat; the lion, having leaped onto the gazelle's shoulders, sinking its teeth into the animal's neck.

— In the move from 20 Seaman Avenue to 55 Payson Avenue, Father and I walk through the passageway that connects the two buildings and with a great show of ceremony carry a toothbrush, the last of the items to be moved, from the old apartment to the new one.

— Bedtime in the new apartment, I in my bed calling out anxiously, "*Kommt keiner, sind alle da?*" ("Is no one else coming, is everyone here?"). Father comes in to reassure me that yes, everyone is present and accounted for.

— Finally, Father showing me his thumb, swollen and infected, entirely swathed in bandages, telling me that the infection was the result of blood poisoning.

Father had not been a healthy man. He had suffered all his life from asthma, from migraine headaches, and from "albumen." These ailments required him to lie down, sometimes for long periods of time, until the symptoms passed. In the year of flight from Spain, he had suffered from a series of painful boils; as soon as one was lanced and subsided, two or more would appear elsewhere on his body. Could these health problems have combined with the stress of his job and the pressure of integrating himself and his family into the new American society to wear down his immune system?<sup>68</sup> Could those boils and that infected thumb have been a manifestation of the systemic infection that was then ravaging him?

In the early spring of 1939, Father began to complain of abdominal pains. Mother at first dismissed them as psychosomatic. We can't think ill of Mother for doing so. Her husband, after all, was only 30 years old. It would be only natural to fail to consider, or to refuse to consider, that a man of his age might be mortally ill. Moreover, this was a woman who had lost her own father in early

middle age; when she was but 10; understandably, she would be most reluctant to consider the possibility that Fortuna would be so cruel as to cause the two most important men in her life to die prematurely.

On March 21, 1939, four months to the day before his death, he wrote a cheerful letter to his grandmother, Clara Lewin, in Berlin:

*Dearest Altechen (Old One)*

*From the children's bedroom one hears, in two voices, "Mary Had a Little Lamb" and "London Bridge is Falling Down," the usual evening song, which now and then is broken by the call, "Is anyone coming?" We have begun looking at Schubert's Blumenband [a folio of flowers, beautifully painted] and, from both sides, the young ones say, "I like this flower the best." Daniel always says, "I like this flower am besten," under the influence of the English, and then the young one corrects him and says "You should say 'am liebsten.'"*

*They've learned not to call out when they wake up in the morning, but instead to go off by themselves, and I no longer awake to the loud "Mamaaa," but rather to the banging of the toilet seat. By themselves, they take up their toys, but the difficulties start with the ferry game: they each have seats on the square brightly-colored boxes, from which countless little toy autos are placed in position, and then the ferries are moved from one end of the bed to the other. Both of them play quietly in their beds, until one says "My ferry got there first," and then the other one calls out, "No, my ferry got there first," and then pretty soon the tears start to flow.*

*Everything is going well with me. I was in bed for two days and then for another week after that I felt sick. I'm very satisfied with Dr. Scherk. He's a comfortable doctor, he tries to make an exact diagnosis, he doesn't recommend any specific diet, and in his billings he is so modest as to make it painful even to mention the subject. Recently we were invited to his house. It's a long long way, although by subway from door to door, but still it's an hour on the subway. You wouldn't want to have to do it every day.*

When the pains persisted, Father went to the doctor but, too late, the pains were diagnosed as appendicitis. By mid-June, he was at Park East Hospital on Manhattan's East Side. In my last memory of him, I am standing at the windows of our third-floor apartment, overlooking Payson Avenue, and look down to see the ambulance, a red cross on its roof, standing in front of the building. The attendants are sliding the stretcher bearing my father through the open ambulance doors. I never saw Father again, never said

goodbye. As the ambulance drove off, Father passed corporeally out of my life.

On June 16, 1939, he wrote from the hospital what may well have been his last letter:

*My dearest Grandmother,*

*I'm writing while lying on my back and therefore somewhat shakily. This is my tenth day here. I'm sure I won't have to stay that much longer. In the last few days I've been feeling very well. No more pain. I'm well cared for. You can well imagine how sweet the family has been to me. With some intermissions, I have 1-9 visitors, mostly from Mother, Leonie and Gab [Gabie], and sometimes too from Eva [Judith] and Ernst. For that I am truly thankful, and for something else too, that the medical insurance pays for all the medicines, and that I have doctors to whom I have entrusted everything, and that everything is progressing so well. When I'm in pain, I think often of you, and that helps me wonderfully. But I don't have much pain, because my doctor freely dispenses injections and pills. The nurses are for the most part awful, they see this as a job more than as a calling, but one of them is very nice, and when she opens the door at 7:00, right away the day has a pleasant prospect. Very soon I'm going to bestir myself to eat; the food is good. Naturally, though, I eat very little. I'm happy to get mail from you and I'd like to know if you were completely calm when you heard about my operation.*

Was this letter an attempt to reassure his grandmother, to allay her concerns, or was he optimistic even then that he would soon be discharged from the hospital and again lead a normal life? In any event, that was not to be. When the doctors opened his abdomen, they found that his appendix had ruptured, that the entire peritoneal wall was suppurated.

Think of the psychic pain that Mother endured those weeks while Father was in the hospital, with the growing certainty that he would not survive. From his bedside at the hospital she returned nightly to the apartment, to the bedside of her two small sons. What doubts, what crushing fears must have assailed her as she stood over the sleeping boys! Could she be a mother to these boys and raise them properly by herself? How could she face the world alone, a widow at 31? And, most pressing, how would she survive financially as a newcomer to this country?

When Father realized that he would not survive, he wrote out for Mother the form of translator's acknowledgment that New York law required for the translation of official documents, so that Mother might have a source of income from such work after his passing.

As my father lapsed into unconsciousness, only his parents and siblings were at his bedside. In later years, Mother told us that Grandmother would not permit her to share in those final hours with him. On July 21, 1939, the 5th day of Av in the Hebrew calendar, Father died.

The month of Av (late July to late August in the civil calendar) has for Jews always been associated with tragedy and grief. The fast day on the Ninth of Av commemorates the destruction of both the First and the Second Temples on that day, the failure of Bar Kochba's revolt against the Romans in 135 C.E. and the final departure of the Jews from Spain in 1492. Observant Jews mark the preceding eight days, including the day of Father's death, as a period of mourning, in which they refrain from eating meat, shaving, listening to music and socializing. So, in my mind, my father's *Jahrzeit* (the anniversary of his death) is inextricably interwoven with these somber events in Jewish history.

I was thought too young to accompany the family to the funeral, so I stayed home. When the adults returned from the cemetery, the mourners' repast awaited them. One of the mourners took me aside and said, "*Jetzt bist Du der Mann der Familie*" ("Now you are the man of the family"). How thoughtless to say such a thing to a young boy, then not yet in kindergarten and newly fatherless! I did not respond, but silently remonstrated, "But I'm only five years old. I can't be the man of the family."

The grown-ups in the family told me that Father had "gone to heaven," to be with *der lieber Gott*. God needed him in heaven, they said; that was why Father had been taken away from us at such a young age. I pictured Father looking down on me benevolently. But I had doubts, too. If heaven was the destination for all who died, it must, I thought, be a very crowded place, with all the people who had ever been born and had since died. I understood that those who had "gone up to heaven" did not come down again. I understood even at that young age that Father had not chosen to exit from his life, that he had been plucked from it, so to speak,

against his wishes and everyone else's. Nevertheless, I accepted the finality of death; Father was gone and would not return.

Grandmother made the funeral arrangements with Edward Hirsch & Sons Funeral Parlor in the Bronx. Father was buried in Cedar Park Cemetery in River Edge, New Jersey, in the Shaarei Tikvah (Gates of Hope) section, next to Clara Herrmann. Not Mother, but the mortal remains of Clara Herrmann, a stranger in life, would be Father's companion as they lay side by side for eternity. In later years, on our annual visits to the cemetery to pay our respects, it would rankle me that Father was buried amid a crush of strangers, one of the many thousands buried on that vast plain. They had lived, most of them, in the largest city in the world, New York, as immigrants seeking a better life and refuge from tyranny. Having ended their days here, their remains lay in a comparably vast metropolis of the dead.

Condolence letters poured in from all over the world, in English, French, Spanish and German. One of them came from Rabbi David de Sola Pool, who had welcomed Father to his synagogue on Father's visit two years earlier. Now, from his summer home on Cape Cod, he wrote to Mother:

*I am profoundly moved and distressed to receive your letter telling of the stark tragedy that has come to you. So cruel and needless seems the loss. Dr. Sachs had so much to give! His fine mind, his mastery of his special field of learning, his idealism, his gentleness and kindness, his helpfulness, his courage, his dignity of bearing, and those other beautiful qualities which shone through his eyes and immediately won for him friendship and admiration—these the world sorely needed and we are all the poorer for his taking away. I grieve, and my heart goes out to you and your children . . .*

Ben and I were now fatherless. Mother had lost her spouse, the father of her children, the breadwinner. She had lost her own father at 10; now, at 31, she was herself a widow. When she wrote to her mother in Berlin to tell her of Father's death, Elisabet Feiler wrote back, railing at God for depriving us of the man in our life, the children so young, just as He had left her a widow at 35, and her children of the same age fatherless, when her husband Hermann had died in 1918.

Insurance covered the expenses of Father's final illness, but he left no life insurance and no savings, leaving Mother and her two small sons in the direst of circumstances. While Father lived,

Mother had wanted to augment the family income and free herself from the constraints of caring day in and day out for two small children. Now, a job was not only desirable but imperative. If we were to survive, she would have to find employment, after less than two years in this country and with no work record.

For Grandmother and Grandfather, Father's death was perhaps even more desolating. In late middle age, they had prematurely lost their oldest child, the one who had been their mainstay since his teens. Grandmother had relied on him for emotional support. She had depended on him to perform the mundane household tasks that were beyond my Grandfather's capabilities or interest. Father was looked up to and admired by his two sisters and his younger brother. His colleagues respected him for his scholarship and human qualities. In the brief period since the family's arrival in America, Father had been the advance man, the "fixer," the man who understood American ways as no one else in the family did.

Now that Father was gone, the "what ifs" and the recriminations began. Fingers were pointed at my mother for dismissing Father's abdominal pains when he first complained of them, instead of urging him to see a doctor immediately; at the doctor, Dr. Scherk, for not immediately taking the blood tests which would have uncovered the infection; and at the hospital, for its inadequate care of my father. There was talk of a medical malpractice action, but no such lawsuit was filed. To initiate and pursue such an action would have required more money than my family had, and the outcome would have been dubious in any event, since at that time it was almost impossible to get a physician to testify against another physician.

A traumatic event such as the loss of a child can bring to the surface marital tensions that have been bubbling beneath. Oftentimes, the marriage does not survive such a crisis. That is exactly what happened between my grandparents. When Father died, the situation between them was extremely tense, "labile" was the word Mother used, but the marriage, however fragile, did survive. Each of my grandparents seemingly made the accommodations that were needed to make it so.

With the loss of her eldest child and mainstay, Grandmother's relationship with Mother was equally tense. Father and his mother, only 21 years apart in age, had been more like brother and sister. There were no secrets kept one from the other. From his sickbed,

he may have told Grandmother of Mother's early dismissal of his abdominal pains. Hearing that, Grandmother may have felt that her daughter-in-law contributed to her son's death, because of her failure to insist that he seek immediate medical care.

Father perhaps also shared with his mother the stresses in his marriage that resulted from the new circumstances in which the family found itself on its arrival in America: the financial pressures on the two of them; on Father's part, the attention necessarily diverted from Mother and the two boys to the needs of his parents and siblings; and, on Mother's part, her inability to be as loving and supporting of him and their two small children as her husband needed her to be.

These stresses may have placed a burden not only on the marriage but also on Mother's relationship with her mother-in-law. The tensions between them may have begun even before Father died and were only aggravated by the circumstances of his death. In the first place, Mother's forebears were shopkeepers, albeit elegant shopkeepers, furriers. Grandmother may well have felt that Mother did not have the station in life that she would have wished for in a daughter-in-law. Did she forget—or put aside—the fact that her husband, too, came from a mercantile background, and also in the clothing trade? Secondly, Grandmother was not one to concede that a wife must have first place in her husband's affections; that had been her place in all those years before her son's marriage. Certainly there was not between Grandmother and Mother that rare but beautiful affection which may develop between a woman and her son's wife. One thinks, first and foremost, of the love of Ruth, the Moabite woman, for her Israelite mother-in-law, Naomi.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, whatever the grievances that each may have had against the other, Mother and Grandmother obeyed the Biblical injunction against the *lashan hara* (the malicious tongue).<sup>70</sup> As children, we never heard a single word of reproach spoken between them, nor did they speak ill of one another in our presence.

What did Father's early death mean to me? If, as a boy, I had been asked that question, I could not have answered it. I could not have imagined the life I would have lived had Father not died. If I had been asked the question as an older boy, in my teens, I might have answered it in economic terms, thinking of the income that he might have provided, and of the burdens that my mother had to assume in raising her two sons. I would have responded, too, that I

had an abundance of emotional support from Mother, from my grandparents and other members of my family.

From my present vantage point, I can more freely speculate on what might have been. Perhaps Father's professorial appointment at Columbia University would have been made permanent, and he would have scaled the academic ladder there. Knowing how dependent his parents were on him and of the love and affection that he had for them, I imagine that he would have found a permanent position in academia, if not at Columbia then at another New York institution or nearby. Within a matter of two years, he would have registered for the draft, and, by the spring of 1942, he might have been in uniform along with millions of other men of draft age. Given his health history and his three dependents, it is equally possible that he might have been rejected for military service altogether or limited to Stateside duty, as his brother Ernie was. Had he served, Mother would undoubtedly have worked, just as she did, and, with her husband's advice from afar, would have managed the household, as she did.

Father would have returned to his family at the end of the war, ready, at 36, to get on with his life, but powerfully affected by his wartime experience. If his accomplishments in his short life were a sign of what was to come, his early death cut short a lifetime of scholarship and academic recognition.<sup>71</sup> Just as one contemplates with awe and regret the music that Mozart might have composed had his life not been cut short at 37, so one thinks with profound sadness of what Father might have accomplished had he lived.

Beyond the loss of earning power and the loss to the academic community, what did the loss of my father mean to me, what does a father's death mean to any child? Many children nowadays experience childhood without a father, whether due to an early death from disease or a road accident, death in military service, or the father's abandonment of his family. Many women today proclaim their ability to raise their children without a man in the house, without a father or "father-figure."<sup>72</sup> Perhaps they can, and perhaps under their circumstances, as in my mother's, they have no choice. Sometimes, it may fairly be said that the wife and child are truly better off without the man in the house. But I grew up with the conviction, buttressed by countless stories from Grandmother and attested to by his brother and sisters, that our father was a truly special person, one who was more than mortal in his God-given

abilities and his scholarship, in his Jewish learning, in his giving nature and in his capacity for love. Growing up, I heard over and over again from Mother that Father had crowded as much into his short life as other men would experience in a normal life span. So he had. To lose at such an early age a man who had such promise, and who would have filled our house with his daily presence, this was truly a great loss for our entire family.

The psychiatrist Dr. Rollo May describes the father-mother-child triangle as

*the perdurable relationship, hung with a thousand different shades and colors, . . . the ladder the child must climb as he or she grows in the world.*<sup>73</sup>

With Father's death, I could not observe and absorb in my own home, day in and day out, that "perdurable relationship" between husband and wife, with its highs and lows, in moments guarded and unguarded, and, later, as an adult, could not model my own behavior accordingly. I lost the man who could have taught me what was required of a man, the person who might have taught me by his example that the shouldering of responsibility—indeed, the eagerness to do so—is the essence of maturity. After Father died, there was no one to teach me that crucial life-lesson.

True, there were adult men who, at critical times in my life, played important roles as monitors, mentors and advisers, but they could not be father surrogates. They did not see themselves, nor I them, in that role. No other man could carry out the day-in-day-out responsibilities of fatherhood in all its many facets. I look back on episodes in my life when I foundered on life's rocky shores, or came close to doing so. That I survived, my body and spirit intact, I credit to God and His divine protection and the love of those who surrounded me. But I am still made to wonder if, under Father's guidance, I would have avoided many of those tempests altogether.

At the very outset of his *Meditations*, the Roman emperor-philosopher Marcus Aurelius pays tribute to those who formed his character, chief among them his father, the emperor Antoninus Pius, who died when Marcus Aurelius was 11. He writes:

*From the reputation and remembrance of my father, I learned modesty and a manly character. In [him] I observed mildness of temper and unchangeable resolution in the things which he had determined on after due deliberation. . . a love of labor and perseverance. . .*<sup>74</sup>

and he goes on to describe his father's other manly virtues.

The well-known American novelist, Richard Ford, defined the role of the father in times of crisis. He must

*work the miracle only a father can work. If his son begins suddenly to fall at a headlong rate, he must through the agony of love and greater age throw him a line and haul him back in.*<sup>75</sup>

How I wish that, in my turbulent teens and early adult years, I had had my father, by his conduct and by his teaching, to set me on the right path, as Antoninus Pius had done for his son, and to be there for me in the manner that Richard Ford described!

If you were to respond, "Yes, that's all true, but were you not guided as well by thoughts of how your mother would react?" I must answer: no. And you might go on to say: perhaps no fear of parental punishment, whether from father or mother, and no withholding of love or loss of respect would have made you act differently. I respond, again, that this may be true, and yet it might have been otherwise had Father lived, had he been there to help me make life's important decisions or at least talked them over with me and thrown me that line that Richard Ford described, to haul me back in when that was needed.

Mother was not someone whom you could turn to for advice, or to whom you could express your innermost feelings. Preoccupied with her own psychic pain, she did not invite that kind of intimacy from her sons. Consequently, I grew up with no training or experience in talking to an elder about these decisions. I would have seen that as an incursion on my autonomy, a confession of inadequacy, instead of seeing the great value in talking these matters over with someone who had already been down that path. Mother was cut from the same cloth, enduring in silent torture without baring her soul to those closest to her. Perhaps I learned those traits from her.

What remained of Father except for the few memories? Fortunately, he left many letters, letters written as a schoolboy to his mother and grandmother; others, written to his mother during his years in Spain; letters from New York to his mother and grandmother; and letters written to Mother when they were betrothed and later, when they were separated by the vicissitudes of their emigration from Spain.

Aside from those letters, there are precious odds and ends: childhood report cards and notebooks; that block of marble on which he had carved his Aleph, the Hebrew letter A; that *Shabbosmütze* (prayer-cap)<sup>76</sup> which Father had bought on the island of Corfu when he and Mother honeymooned there in 1932; and the full-length *tallit* (prayer shawl) which he customarily wore in synagogue. Unaware of Jewish burial customs, Mother had failed to deliver the *tallit* to the undertaker so that Father could be buried in it. In later years, she passed the *tallit* on to me, but I have not worn it, feeling that it was too much a part of him, that it would be arrogant of me literally to don his mantle.

There are only a few photographs: Father as a child, blond-haired, eyes gray-green; Father on a motor launch taking him and Grandfather to Helgoland, a North Sea resort island; Father engrossed in a book while sitting in a deckchair on a steamship; and Father in the Parc del Ouest in Madrid, holding his two sons, one in each arm. Finally, another photo, perhaps a passport photo, a close-up headshot of Father staring directly into the camera. That photograph, framed in a 1940's vintage Art Deco frame, black and silver, hung, a family icon, from a nail on one of Mother's bookcases all the years we lived on Seaman Avenue. Because of the head-on pose, it seemed that Father's eyes moved, following me regardless of where I stood. He was there with us, through that photograph, even though he was no longer physically among us.

Father's death left me with a sense, at a very young age, of the underlying fragility of life, the omnipresent feeling that chaos and disorder lie always just beneath the surface of our everyday existence. The storm that uproots a tree, which falls on the neighboring house; the random encounter with a sociopathic killer; the drunken driver on the wrong side of the road; the encounter on a woodland trail with wasps or other feral beasts—all these and many other random events can tragically change one's life in an instant. In my own life. I have thankfully had no such experiences since my father's death, but the feeling has remained nonetheless.<sup>77</sup>

In the end, it was up to each of us to survive, to make of our lives what we could; there was nothing else to be done but carry on. But there's no mistaking it: Father's death was a turning point, perhaps *the* turning point, in my family's story, and in my own life.

## MOTHER

**E**xuberant, vivacious, fun-loving, optimistic, good-natured, outgoing and energetic . . . these are not words that come to mind in describing my mother. Rather, I would call her melancholy, existentially sad, perhaps even clinically depressed—life lived in a minor key. That is how she struck me from the time I was old enough to sense her moods and her state of mind. As a child, you accept people as they are, or you may simplify by saying, “I like this person,” or “I can’t stand that person,” and so on. One of the burdens of growing older is that you start to have more complex responses to friends and loved ones. You love them or accept them despite their obvious faults and frailties, or you decide that, despite their many good qualities, the bad ones outweigh the good and the relationship is harmful to you. Many people in early adulthood begin to make those more well-rounded judgments. So it is with us and our parents: we recognize their shortcomings as they see ours, but, except in the most egregious cases, we go on loving them, recognizing that love is a multi-faceted and sometimes ambiguous emotion. That describes my feelings for Mother.

In outward appearance, she always seemed beautiful to me—above average in height, perhaps 5’9”, slender, with never a weight problem, or so it appeared. Until osteoporosis overtook her in old age, she carried herself erectly. Others noticed her ramrod straight posture and complimented her on it. She had coal-black hair, a well-proportioned nose and mouth and, the most prominent feature, large dark brown eyes encircled by long black eyelashes. The eyes were expressive, but there was no sparkle, no *joie de vivre*, in them. If the eyes are indeed the window into the soul, hers conveyed a profound sadness.

Mother was not one to seek to hide her moroseness behind a false gaiety. There were some, however, who saw beyond her melancholy to the spiritual illumination that lay at her core. During our years in New Haven, Mother was visiting us there one weekend. A paperhanger, Mr. Amodio, was putting new wallpaper on our living room walls. Striking up a conversation, Mother and Mr. Amodio discovered their shared interest in the otherworldly, the supernatural. Later, after Mother had returned to New York, Mr. Amodio expressed to us his great respect for her, telling us that he had captured her “aura.” There was no need to ask him to describe that “aura.”

Mother seems to have been melancholy from a very early age. In a photograph of her, taken at age 9, she is seated, dressed in a frilly white pinafore, holding in her arms her favorite doll. In a sidelong glance, she looks warily at the camera with not a spark of childish animation or joy in her face. Years later, as a new bride in 1932, she might have had reason to be pleased with her life and optimistic about the future. Not so. That her melancholia continued is evident from Father’s frequent admonitions in his letters to her, over the next six years, to “*hab’ Mut*,” to be courageous, to keep her chin up.

By way of contrast, there is another photograph of Mother, this one in color, taken in 1962 when she was 54 years old. She is standing atop Stone Mountain, outside of Atlanta, Georgia. I cherish that photo because she is smiling, one of the few times in which I saw a genuine open-mouth smile on her face. That is not, however, the way I remember her.

There was much in Mother’s life that would have brought down a woman far better prepared than she to withstand life’s slings and arrows. When she was six years old, her father, Hermann Feiler, then already 37, left home to serve in the Kaiser’s army in World War I. Although he saw no service in the trenches, he was proud to serve the Fatherland. To his wife, he was as much a hero as if he were daily risking his life on the front lines. His young daughter, my mother, saw little of him during those war years. Shortly before the Armistice, he was mustered out and returned to civilian life. He resumed his work at the family business, *Gebrüder Feiler* (Feiler Bros.), wholesale and retail furriers, in the building on Berlin’s Leipzigerstrasse where the firm maintained its offices and showrooms. While seated at his desk four months later, he suffered a massive heart attack and died instantly. He was 41 years old.

Mother was at the family home on the Kaiserdamm in Charlottenburg when the telephone call came from her father's office, telling Frau Feiler that her husband was "very ill" and that she should come to the office at once. She heard her mother say angrily, "He's already dead, isn't he?" When the voice on the other end of the line admitted that this was true, Elisabeth Feiler let out a widow's keening wail, a primordial outburst that Mother would never forget. So, at 10, she was left fatherless. Her brother Helmut was 7; the youngest child, Stefanie, was but two years old.

Elisabeth Feiler had her husband interred at Weissensee, the Jewish cemetery on the outskirts of Berlin. The tombstone marking his grave contrasts sharply with the simple granite slabs nearby. Expressing her pride in her late husband's military service in the war that had just ended, Elisabeth Feiler commissioned for his grave a tombstone fashioned of four fluted columns, forming a square, surmounted by crossed swords and a Greek warrior's helmet. The words on the rectangular bronze plaque affixed to the upright stone speak to Feiler's devotion to his wife and children and his loyalty to the Fatherland. One can deprecate the ornate gaudiness of the monument and the cheap patriotic sentiment that it expresses, as Mother sometimes did. Still, this was a stone erected by a woman who clearly loved and admired her husband.

Hermann Feiler's death had a devastating impact on his widow, left alone now to raise three small children. It appears that she took out her anger and frustrations on her oldest child, my mother, who saw her mother becoming increasingly neurotic, anxious and obsessive. In a small example of the changes resulting from her husband's death, Frau Feiler put an end to all Jewish observance in her home. She told her children that she could not worship a God who would take her beloved Hermann from her at such a young age. For the same reason, the gravestone that she had designed omitted any sign that the man buried there had been of the Jewish faith.

As Mother entered her adolescent years, her confrontations with her mother over her studies, over the young men she was seeing and other normal elements of a teenage girl's life became more frequent and more violent. At 16, Mother could endure no more of her mother's tantrums and suspicions. Having applied for and received a judicial declaration that she was an "emancipated minor," she moved out of the house and took a furnished room elsewhere

in the neighborhood. We can well imagine, without having first-hand knowledge of it, how difficult it was for her to live under her mother's roof and how great the stress that finally drove her to leave the house and live on her own. Living independently, Mother completed her university studies in Berlin and Heidelberg and enrolled in the doctoral program at the University of Berlin.

We can already see in this brief outline of Mother's early years the self-sufficiency that she was to demonstrate when she became a widow at a young age. In the 1920's, not many unmarried Jewish women lived in an unsupervised setting at so early an age. Not many women, regardless of background, set their sights on a university education, the attainment of a doctorate and the pursuit of a career in academia. Mother had the ambition, the self-reliance and the self-discipline to strive for and achieve those goals.

We know little of Mother's life during her university years, from 1926 to 1932. Those were the years of the Weimar Republic and Berlin was the epicenter of Weimar culture. Amos Elon describes the city during those years as, "vibrant with sex and intellect . . . the crucible for every conceivable innovation"<sup>78</sup> in the arts and sciences, in music, the fine arts, poetry, drama and the novel. It was the time of Kurt Weill, Lotte Lenya, Bertolt Brecht, Thomas Mann and others equally distinguished. For the liberal esthete, those were golden years, the best in Germany since Goethe, Schiller and Lessing. Mother was, I am sure, familiar with these contemporary German artists and writers; she had probably read their poetry and novels, seen their plays, visited the galleries to view their paintings. We can be equally certain that the lusty and bawdy nightlife of the 1920's, made famous in the musical, "Cabaret," held no interest for her.

As a graduate student in philology at the University, she met my father, then enrolled in the same doctoral program, and entered a world previously unknown to her. That new world, my father's world, straddled academia and Judaism. First as his fiancée and later as his wife, Mother learned to light the Sabbath candles and participate in *Havdalah* (the close of the Sabbath). On the High Holydays, she attended services with Father and his family, who came from a more religiously observant background than hers.

In 1931, Mother obtained her Ph.D. degree from the University of Berlin; Father would earn his doctorate in the following year. At the time of their marriage in October 1932, Father had already

secured his dual appointments at the *Universidad Complutense de Madrid* and the *Centro de Estudios Históricos*. He left immediately for Madrid to take up his responsibilities there, leaving Mother, newly-wed, at home in Berlin until he could arrange for her to join him.

The prospect of such a move must have been appealing to Mother. She already spoke Spanish well, and there was no one among her family whom she would especially have regretted leaving. Besides, already in 1932 there were the increasingly troubling stirrings in Germany of the Nazism which was to become even more disturbing in the years to come.

The months after Father and Mother were reunited in Madrid in January 1933 were evidently happy ones for both of them. His letters home to his mother speak of his contentment with his work, of Sabbath evenings with friends, of socializing with Christian friends and colleagues, and visits by friends and family from Germany and Palestine.

All that changed swiftly when the Spanish Civil War broke out in July 1936 and Franco's bombers began their air assault on Madrid in the following month. The next twelve months were to test Mother's endurance as nothing else had done. She could not have dreamed, in her worst nightmares, of the trials that lay ahead. Arrival in America solved the largest problem: that of survival, of life itself. But it brought with it more mundane difficulties. In the first weeks in New York, our family again lived, as it had in Paris, in one room, this one the room that Father had rented on West 85th Street off Central Park West. In this setting, it was inevitable that the stresses would continue. With Father away all day at work, Mother was left at home to take care of the two small boys. Knowing almost no one of her own age in this impersonal metropolis, she groused to Father about her isolation; she wanted to get out and work to contribute to the family income. Father wouldn't hear of it. His stubbornness in this regard must have sorely tested their marriage. To stay at home, cooped up in the four walls with two small children, was this why she had gone to University? Was it for this that she had earned her Ph.D? Certainly not! When Father responded that, out of his meager income, they could hire a nursemaid for the children or a housekeeper, one or the other, Mother tellingly chose to hire the nursemaid; for her, housekeeping was easier than childcare.

Three months after our arrival in this country, Father's parents, my grandparents, arrived, taking occupancy of the elegant riverview apartment that Father had found for them at 1781 Riverside Drive in Inwood. By then, we had moved into the apartment at 20 Seaman Avenue, just four blocks from my grandparents. That proximity would prove a godsend in the years ahead, but it must have also generated its own stresses. Mother was on outwardly friendly terms with her in-laws and had great respect for her father-in-law, Curt Sachs. But she must have resented the demands that they made on Father's time and energy. In this respect, patterns set long before she entered the family were carried over from Germany to America. Father's letters home from Spain to Germany show how devoted he was to them, especially to his mother, and how much they in turn depended on him, first for advice in overcoming the many hurdles to immigration to America and then, once here, in making their way in this new country. Grandmother, especially, was a woman who could not be ignored, nor would Father have wished to do so. Grandmother doted on her eldest son. How could Mother compete with a woman who regarded her son as a hero, as a near-divine?

Then, in the spring of 1939, with Father's illness and death, came the second sledgehammer blow in Mother's young life. The accusations that attended his illness, the attempts to fix blame, drove a further wedge into the relationship between Mother and her mother-in-law, to the point where Mother was relegated to the sidelines in making the funeral arrangements. Perhaps it was better for everyone that way.

For the next 34 years, Mother worked, and worked hard, sometimes at two jobs, always at substandard salaries. Seeking restitution from the West German government, she reported to Evsey Rashba, the Swiss attorney who was representing her in that claim, that her annual take-home pay in the years 1949 through 1956, while teaching fulltime at the Walden School and part-time at Hunter College, ranged between \$1,989 to \$3,369. Those were poverty-level salaries even in those years. In her August 22, 1963 letter to Rashba, Mother commented, in German, that

*I think the Germans [the Restitution Office] can see from this documentation that, by American standards, my income in those years was inadequate to support a three-person family.*

Ah, the woes that were submerged in that calm understatement!

Adding to the intense financial pressures was the sheer physical effort required to earn a living in those years. Instead of coming home when her daytime job had ended, she had to stay downtown on Tuesdays and Thursdays to fulfill her commitment at Hunter College. That meant taking the bus across Central Park at 86th Street, transferring to the downtown Lexington Avenue bus to get to Hunter, on East 67th Street, grabbing a quick supper at the faculty cafeteria, teaching for three hours, until 9:00 at night, then taking the buses back to the West Side, catching the local at 86th Street, changing to the express at 125th Street and riding it up to our stop, 200th Street. Somehow, she found time to prepare lessons, correct both high school and college papers simultaneously, act as mentor and advisor to her students and, after all that, run a household and be a mother to her two sons.

She endured this grueling schedule even though standing and walking were difficult for her because of her chronic phlebitis, an inflammation of the veins in her legs. She also had what physicians refer to as “irritable bowel syndrome,” which sometimes forced her to dismiss a class before it was over so that she could rush to the ladies’ room. Such a schedule, in the face of these disabilities, would have daunted a much younger and healthier woman, but I never in all those years heard her complain about the hand that life had dealt her.

In 1955, the year of my graduation from college, she moved on from her teaching position at The Walden School to Sarah Lawrence College and taught German there until 1961, all the while continuing her part-time teaching at Hunter College. Her commute in those years from upper Manhattan to Bronxville, from Bronxville twice-weekly to midtown Manhattan and then home to upper Manhattan again, all via public transportation, put even more stress on her. During that period she was teaching a full course load and grading dozens of papers at both colleges. That she carried out these arduous responsibilities conscientiously and not cavalierly is attested to by the accolades she received from the students whom she taught at the two institutions and from fellow faculty members.

Her life began to improve in 1961 when she received the appointment to the fulltime faculty at Hunter College that she had worked so hard to earn. She started as an assistant professor at \$7,300, then received a promotion to associate professor in 1968. A

year later, she was earning the munificent salary of \$17,000. She would have enjoyed in summertime the respite from teaching that the school vacation would otherwise bring, but, aside from a week or two at a farm, summer gave her no such relief. She could not pass up the few hundred dollars that she might earn teaching a summer session course or serving as a counselor on a camp staff. There was also the need to burnish her professional credentials so that she could achieve her goal of moving into the academic mainstream and up the professorial ladder. One summer, her former colleague, Kurt Bergel, who had moved on to a faculty position at Chapman College in southern California, arranged for Mother to teach summer session courses there. Other summers were spent at the Colby-Swarthmore Summer School of Languages and at the University of California at Berkeley, the last of these on a research grant from the American Philosophical Society.

In her early years of college teaching, Mother did not have the time to produce books, articles and other writings, as her colleagues did. She explained in a grant application that “due to my heavy schedule and outside responsibilities for so many years, I have not been able to do as much research and writing as I would have liked to.” Later, when she was teaching fulltime at Hunter College and the financial pressures had eased somewhat, she had both the time and the motivation to do more writing. Still, in going through her papers, I was not prepared for the volume of what she had written and for the breadth of her interests as evidenced by these papers. They fell into three discrete areas: Spanish literature, especially the novels and drama of the *Siglo del Oro*, Spain’s Golden Age; the pedagogy of foreign-language teaching; and, more and more as she grew older, Jewish subjects, in particular those related to rabbinical mysticism and Sephardic Jewry.

As we were growing up, I was hardly aware of her writing. She may have invited us to read her articles after they had been published, but we never saw the drafts nor did she solicit comments from us. There would have been no reason for her to do that, since we did not have the background necessary to evaluate these articles.

Her withholding of her writings from us was of a piece with her reluctance to communicate any aspect of her inner life to us. In her later years, when I chided her for her unwillingness to tell us anything of her childhood and early adulthood, her stock response was “You never asked.” That much was true. I did not ask because

if she were to have given me that opportunity, I would soon have arrived at questions that would cause her pain: her recollections of her father, of her mother, of her husband. Why exactly did she leave her mother's house as a teenager? Were there other men in her life before she met Father? What did she recall of Father's final illness and death? What happened in 1943 to cause Mother to send Ben and me to live elsewhere for that year? Simply to ask those questions would have stirred up those ghastly memories, and I wanted to spare her that pain. Likewise, when I suggested that I interview her in front of an open tape recorder, she responded that she would feel inhibited by the machine. I dropped all such further efforts, feeling that I was encountering the impregnable defenses that she had built up over a lifetime.

In the area of sexual mores, Mother was a bundle of inconsistencies. She often expressed relief that she had had sons and not daughters, because, as she explained, her sons as teenagers had the freedom to express their sexual drives. Daughters would not have had that same freedom, not in the 1950's. Later, in the 1970's, she voiced distaste for the strident women who were in the forefront of the Women's Liberation Movement. It was not that she opposed their aims; it was their confrontational tactics that she objected to.

One noticed as well a certain inhibition in sexual matters, not surprising in women of her generation. When women first began to wear slacks, they were designed to be fastened and loosened by a zipper at the hip, and not at the front as men's trousers are. She once told me that she disapproved of women's slacks that were zipped up the front. I did not press her to explain why that distinction was so important to her. She could convey with a look, a tone, that this was a subject she did not care to pursue.

On another occasion, when I was about 10 or 11 years old, I asked Mother for the meaning of a word I had come across in my reading. The word was "prostitute." She answered, "A prostitute is a woman who has many boyfriends." As young as I was, that definition seemed unsatisfactory to me. I could have responded incredulously, "You mean, if a woman is dating three men at the same time, she is a prostitute?" But, discretion again was the better part of valor; I sensed that her answer was as far as she was willing to go in this matter. Not wanting to embarrass her, I didn't ask the follow-up question.

As we grew older, there was much about Mother that irked me. It sometimes showed in my voice, which took on an edge of exasperation when we spoke. As a result, she would frame her requests as timidly as possible: “Danny dear, do you think you might . . .,” accompanied by a pleading look in her eyes. Sometimes, no words were needed; that look was all that was needed. I longed for less circumlocution, more directness, but that was not her way. Occasionally in later years, the floodgates would burst, and I would explode with impatience. She would respond, softly, “Danny, please don’t talk to your mother that way.” Then I would feel rotten that I had so lost my self-control as to earn this rebuke from her.

These were the minor irritations that one encounters in every close relationship. I would not want to convey the impression that I disliked or despised my mother. Far from it; I loved her. I loved her for what she had suffered and endured on our behalf, because she had organized her life around us and constantly thought of ways to improve our lot. In gratitude for what she had given us, we made life decisions as adults that took her into account. We wanted her to be a part of our life, to the extent that she wished to be. Living in New York City held no attraction for us but the distances between her home in New York and the cities where we spent our adult life, first Washington and then New Haven, were not insurmountable, for her or for us.

She raised two sons for whom the road to adulthood was not an easy one, with many crises along the way. I owed much to Mother, in the true sense of that word. I felt I owed her a debt which had to be repaid. In making life choices, an important consideration was always whether this choice and not that one would make her proud of me. It was the least I could do, after all the difficulties she had endured on my behalf and because of me. I could not, after all that, betray her or give her cause to be disappointed in me. And in that I believe I succeeded, without in any way compromising my own desires and goals.

One of the great boons that Mother bestowed on Ben and me was her love of books and of reading. Mother was proud of her library. At its core were the beautiful leather-bound books that she had inherited from Father and he in turn from his grandfather, Louis Lewin. Over the years, she had added to the library, acquiring books on Jewish themes and paperbound books by or about the

classical Spanish authors. These, I suppose, were useful in the courses she taught at Hunter.

From her I learned that a library has great value in itself, that a well-stocked library is a beautiful thing, not because the books “look nice” on the shelf, but because they are a constant invitation to expand knowledge. They call to you to be pulled off the shelf, to be dipped into for a few minutes, or to be read or reread from cover to cover. In Mother’s later years, she would expansively wave her arms around the living room, as if embracing her books, and tell me that “This is your inheritance.” Most bibliophiles feel that way. A nearby public library is a great boon and paperback books have their place, as do the new electronic books, but nothing matches the ready access to our private library, the shelves lined with the bound books we have collected throughout our lifetime. Henry Ward Beecher, the celebrated minister, said it well:

*Books are not made for furniture, but there is nothing that so beautifully furnishes a house. A little library, growing each year, is an honorable part of a man’s history [and] is not a luxury, but one of the necessities of life.*<sup>79</sup>

There are those who say, “Of what use is a personal library, in this day of disposable paperbacks, books-on-tablets or disks, and public libraries?” “Read the book,” they will say, “or listen to it via audio CD, then dispose of it appropriately. Put it back on the shelf? No, that’s the old way, the low-tech way.”

Certainly, there is a limited truth in such statements. Along with millions of others, I enjoy the convenience of reading library books and listening to books recorded on CD’s. Of the books that I buy, many, when read, are donated to charity or sold at a pittance to second-hand bookstores.

But there is as much truth or more in the view that a book does not cease to be a treasure after it has been read the first time. In the opening lecture of his course in Modern European Literature at Cornell University, Professor V. V. Nabokov would unfailingly admonish his students that a great book does not yield its treasures at the first reading. That first reading, he would say, is for the limited purpose of becoming superficially acquainted with the story line and the cast of characters. Wagging his fingers at the class, he would drive his point home: only re-reading, and still a third reading, yields the secret fruits of the garden, to use Nabokov’s metaphor. In the same vein, Harold Bloom has written that

“Literary genius, difficult to define, depends on deep reading for its verification.”<sup>80</sup> Even if a book is not entirely re-read, there is pleasure in knowing that it is on the shelf, to be dipped into at random in a leisure moment, page by page, or paragraph by paragraph.

The garden referred to by Nabokov—we could call it the Garden of Readin’—is a metaphor for the ordered beauty and wealth of knowledge and ideas that a garden represents. Just as one ambles through a garden, pausing at each bed to appreciate and perhaps to pluck the flowers that bloom therein, so one might amble past bookshelves, pausing every now and then to pull a book from the shelf. It is no coincidence that a 12<sup>th</sup> century Spanish Jew, Judah ibn Tibbon, also thought of his library as his garden. In bequeathing his extensive library to his son, he adjured him in his will to

*Make your books your companions, let your cases and shelves be your pleasure grounds and gardens. Bask in their paradise, gather their fruit, pluck their roses, take their spices and their myrrh. If your soul be satiate and weary, change from garden to garden, from furrow to furrow, from prospect to prospect. Then will your desire renew itself and your soul be filled with delight.*<sup>81</sup>

That was Mother’s viewpoint too. She used this quotation in “Jewish Books in Our Lives,” an undated article marking November as Jewish Book Month. In that same article, she wrote that

*In the wanderings of exile, books have often been our most treasured possessions, at times the only ones we were able to rescue from a cataclysm. The power of the word, the light of knowledge, are indestructible even to the ravages of persecution.*

These words came from Mother’s heart. My parents had been able to bring many books with them to the United States, but Mother’s thoughts came back again and again to the books they had had to leave behind in Spain. There was great pain in her voice whenever she recalled that now-lost library.

Mother had her deficiencies, as we all do, but in her lifelong thirst for knowledge, in her love of the book, she was a strong role model for her children, engendering in them a similar love of reading and what may be found at any age between the covers of the book.

Mother also passed on to her children her love of words and word-play. She enjoyed Scrabble®, which enabled her to use her splendid vocabulary to advantage. Etymologies, word-origins, were mother's milk to her. Every year at the time of the High Holydays, she would express to me her wonderment at the origin of the word "atonement," as in "Day of Atonement." Instead of the Latin root which one might expect by analogy with the word "detonate" or "intonation," the word is actually formed from the words "at" and "one", so that, combining the two, atonement means "at-one-ment, or "in harmony with." In this one word were combined Mother's love for etymology and her deep interest in mysticism.

As the years passed, Mother became increasingly absorbed in mysticism and in the spiritual elements of her life. After I left the house, she spent the thirty-five years that remained of her life in a continuing quest for faith, spiritual awareness and self-understanding, with many stops along the way. At Hunter College, she became the faculty advisor to the Hillel Foundation there, giving counsel to many young Jewish women at the school. Through Hillel, she came to know Dr. Alfred Jospe, national executive director of the Hillel Foundation, and his wife, Eva. For eleven summers, Mother worked with the Jospes at the Hillel summer leadership training camp, Camp Starlight, in the Poconos. Mother remained close to the Jospes for the rest of her life, having in common with them the broad intellectual perspective of the German Jewish émigré. Together, they represented the best of *Haskalah*, the enlightened rational approach to Judaism.

It was at Starlight, too, that Mother became acquainted with the Chassidic movement, the other extreme in Judaism from the rationalism she shared with the Jospes. The vessel for her introduction to Chassidism was Zalman Schachter, a rabbi originally ordained by the Lubavitch yeshiva. Reb Zalman saw himself as a seeker after a purer, more spiritual, Judaism, a faith that could attract the many Jews who had never been observant or who had "fallen away" from strict adherence to the tradition.

I am convinced that, for Mother, Zalman Schachter was a soulmate, a man with whom she communicated at the deepest levels. We so rarely encounter such men and women in our lives, and we are indeed fortunate if we are given the opportunity to do so. Of such persons, Albert Schweitzer wrote:

*Sometimes our light goes out but is blown into flame by another human being. Each of us owes our deepest thanks to those who have rekindled this light.*

Those sparks flashed in both directions. Mother, I believe, was a “light-rekindler” for Zalman as well.

During my childhood, and well into my adulthood, my image of Mother was that, having been widowed at the too-early age of 31, she had foresworn married life, that she had, indeed, denied herself a life of passion and emotion to raise her two children, and find satisfaction entirely in her teaching and scholarly writing. But that was, as we would later learn, a false and entirely unrealistic picture. Mother had intense relationships, albeit, so far as we know, non-physical, with several men, married men. She sought out, and was drawn to, men who could meet her on her own highly evolved and highly spiritual plane. This is not to say that her feelings and relationships were exclusively other-worldly. With these men, she was perforce limited to secret relationships of the heart, which evoked in her the most intense feelings, feelings which she poured out in her poetry. That poetry she took pains to keep entirely to herself.

Through Zalman Schachter, Mother was drawn to Lubavitch Hasidism and to its charismatic Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson. Beginning in the late 1950’s, she had several audiences with the Rebbe at Lubavitch world headquarters at 770 Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn and carried on an ongoing correspondence with him. His letters to her, which she saved, responded to her innermost concerns at a time when she was experiencing grave emotional crises in her life. They also reflected the constant struggle waged in her psyche between her lifelong habits of reason and scholarship, habits that were central to her being, and her desire to acquire the gift of faith, of non-reason. In this struggle, R. Schneerson was her spiritual guide, leading Mother through the sometimes incomprehensible ways of Halachah and Chassidus.

In a letter dated July 1958, she told the Rebbe of her crisis of faith and understanding. Saying that she “accepts wholeheartedly the ethical and spiritual teachings of Judaism which I believe find acceptance with most peoples,” she continued:

*My trouble arises with the necessity of the performance of the particular laws or mitzvahs which, if I am to practice most of them, I must do with a child's trust in tradition and act. . . with the certainty of the intellect and understanding of an adult.*

Testifying to the astonishing breadth of her reading (and this in the days before the Internet and its search engines made this material much more accessible), she quoted in that same letter the Torah, the *Shulchan Aruch* (the codification of Jewish law) and the *Pirke Aboth* (Ethics of the Fathers); Pythagoras of Samos, the classical Greek philosopher-mathematician; St. John the Baptist; the Viennese psychiatrist Dr. Wilhelm Stekel; the physicist Sir James Jeans; Helen Keller; MIT professor Dr. George R. Harrison; Professor Pinard of the Boston School of Psychiatry; and the great rabbis Bahya b. Joseph ibn Pakuda and Moshe Chaim Luzzato. She went on to say:

*. . . since the day before I went to New York to see you, on the train, where I usually order ham and eggs for breakfast, I only ordered eggs, and since that time I have not eaten many former dishes such as ham, bacon, lobster, shrimp, etc. I felt I should do this out of the graciousness of your audience at the time I visited you, but I cannot quite understand why my dietary habits have still continued in this vein since my taste for them still has a seemingly strong potential. Perhaps I shall understand this too one day.<sup>82</sup>*

Addressing Mother as “Miriam,” her Hebrew name, the Rebbe answered with two important letters. Using powerful metaphors, he stressed in both letters the primary importance of observance. Responding to her statement that she believed in God and His closeness, but was endeavoring to find her own way of serving Him, R. Schneerson told her:

*This is a long and round-about way. It is analogous to a person searching for the secrets of the functions of the physical body, e.g. how food is converted into blood, tissue, energy and sustaining life; it would surely not be the right approach to stop eating and drinking, pending the arrival of the conclusions of his study. Similarly, in an effort to find a way of serving G-d, one must not postpone such service until one has completed one's search, and, moreover, the absence of the religious practice itself handicaps the powers of the intellect to grasp the truth.*

He concluded by saying:

*The key to the solution is “Na’aseh v’nishma,” where “Na’aseh,” practical religion in daily life, is the prerequisite condition for “Nishma,” study and understanding.*

In a later letter he urged her to

*tread this road of pure faith in G-d, without [excessive] introspection and self-searching, as in the simple illustration of a man walking: he will walk most steadily and assuredly if he will not be conscious of his walk and not seek to consciously coordinate the hundreds of muscles operative in locomotion, or he would not be able to make his first step.*

The Rebbe’s words apparently had a strong impact on Mother, because she adopted Kashruth, the Jewish dietary laws, in her own home. In restaurants and elsewhere outside her home, she avoided meats that had not been koshered. In a letter three years later, the Rebbe praised her for her success “in observing the dietary laws without difficulties.” He told her that

*adherence to the dietary laws ordained by G-d will surely be highly beneficial for your general metabolism, inasmuch as G-d’s reward is in kind, in generous measure.”*

When Mother informed R. Schneerson that her son Daniel was engaged, the impending marriage gave the Rebbe the opening to raise again one of his favorite subjects, Mother’s single-ness:

*While we are on the subject of matrimony, I hope and pray that before long you may also have good news to report about yourself, as we have talked about this in the past.*

Four years later, Mother was still unmarried, much to the Rebbe’s disappointment. He wrote:

*May G-d grant that all your affairs should be with Hatzlocho, [success] including the essential matter (forgive me for emphasizing it so frequently), namely a suitable Shidduch (link, i.e. marriage) for you in every respect.*

The lengthy correspondence between Mother and the Rebbe and the many personal audiences that he gave her, despite the intense demands on his time, testify, I believe, to the glow that many people felt in her presence. We can be quite certain that there were few secular Jewish women to whom the Rebbe devoted as much

time, guidance and support as he gave to Mother. She was similarly drawn to the Rebbe's charisma, that same charisma that even now, two decades after his death, causes his followers to believe that he was the *Moshiach*, the Messiah, sent to bring peace to a troubled world.

Ultimately, however, Mother turned away from Chasidism and broke off further contact with the Rebbe. She did so, I think, because it seemed to her that the movement assigned a secondary and subordinate role to women. She may have also felt, and resented, the inequality of her relationship with the Rebbe, stemming first from his greater learning in Torah and Talmud and then because, as a woman, she could never be an equal in his eyes. It is likely, finally, that she could not attain that suspension of disbelief, that reliance on pure faith, that Orthodoxy in general and Chasidism in particular require.

Mother also had a deep interest in Jewish mysticism, growing out of her love for *Sepharad* (the Jewish name for Spain) and the deeply-rooted tradition of Jewish mysticism among the rabbis there before the Expulsion. In the *First Jewish Catalogue*,<sup>83</sup> she is listed as a resource in Jewish mysticism. I never learned whether that listing drew any inquiries. That interest in mysticism led her and many others in the 1970's to Zen Buddhism, but, Zen proved unsatisfying because of its otherworldliness.

The final stop in her decades-long search for spiritual fulfillment was Subud, a worldwide movement founded in Indonesia in 1925. Subud teaches that all faiths are valid paths to the Almighty. Absolute surrender to God's will is the way to serenity and a satisfying life. At Subud Mother found in other women spiritual sisters who were seeking enlightenment and tranquility as she was. She must have derived considerable sustenance from her association with Subud, because she attended both its national and its world conferences. At Mother's funeral, I could not help but notice that, other than her immediate family, only her associates from Subud were in attendance.

When Mother turned 65 in 1973, she retired from her teaching at Hunter College. Two years earlier, in 1971, the City University system had initiated its open admissions system, under which any graduate of a four-year public high school in New York City could enter college with minimal requirements. If under-prepared students needed it, they could enroll in remedial courses for college

credit. As a professor in the evening school, Mother had for years taught older adults, women who came to class after their normal working hours. What they lacked in academic preparation they made up for in motivation, in their eagerness to learn and in their respect for her as their teacher. That changed with the advent of open admissions. For Mother, as for many other highly-qualified professors who had devoted their lives to teaching, there was no pleasure in standing in front of a sea of uncomprehending, indifferent or actively hostile faces. Mother had had enough; she turned in her retirement papers.

Her colleagues organized a retirement dinner for her, held in the private dining room of the faculty eating area at Hunter. Mother invited my wife and me to attend. Fellow faculty and former students stretching across her three decades of teaching were present to show their respect for her. After the luncheon, one speaker after another stood and testified that Mother had instilled in them an affection for the Spanish language and for Spanish literature. From the praise that I heard heaped on her, it was clear that Mother had been a dedicated teacher, one who took pride in her profession and took pleasure in imparting her knowledge to her students.

I was prepared for that. What came as a surprise to me were the words of praise from students who rose to speak glowingly of Mother as a mentor and advisor. Many of them said that Mother had helped them to surmount crises in their own lives. I marveled at these words, and was not a little saddened by them. It was evident that Mother had skills in interpersonal relations that she had put to use over the years in helping students and colleagues. She had been unable or unwilling to use those same skills in dealing with her two growing boys. Did Mother feel a twinge of guilt, did she share my sadness on hearing those words and realizing how they would resonate to me? *¿Quién sabe?*, as one might say in her beloved Spanish. I didn't mention it after the dinner was over. No point in stirring over those old coals.

In 1963, Mother had moved into one of the first apartments completed at Lincoln Towers, the huge middle-income development built by Alcoa. At her new quarters at 160 West End Avenue, she would have ready access to the concerts and other cultural diversions at Lincoln Center and would no longer face a subway ride to reach any destination within the city. Mother

remained in that beautiful light-filled apartment at Lincoln Towers as long as her health permitted. When she could no longer perform routine chores such as housekeeping, shopping and cooking, volunteers from *Dorot* ("Generations"), an upper West Side charitable organization serving the isolated elderly in that area, came regularly to provide assistance. The young women who helped her in those roles spoke of Mother with the same reverence and affection that her students had.

Retirement was a great boon to Mother. She had received a modest amount in restitution from the West German government, modest because, by departing early from Nazi Germany, she and Father had not compiled the lengthy employment record that would have demonstrated that they had lost promising academic careers in Germany. But her pension from the teachers' retirement fund made her financially secure. The New York State legislature had amended the teachers' retirement law to allow professional staff to include their years as adjunct professors in computing past service credits. This enabled Mother to include all her years of teaching, going back to 1940, and gave her a pension that she could live on comfortably.

Unlike many other retired faculty members, Mother did not travel frequently in her retirement years. Because of her physical limitations, travel, other than the short trips needed to visit my brother Ben in Storrs, Connecticut, and me in New Haven, was arduous for her. Besides, she said, she had done all the traveling she needed or wished for in her earlier years, a reference to her country-hopping before our family arrived in the States. In retirement, Mother continued to read voraciously and attended plays and concerts at nearby Lincoln Center. She also enrolled in an adult education course in Jewish philosophy, but gave it up when she realized that she knew more about the subject than the lecturer did.

As she entered her ninth decade, Mother's health began to decline. Twice she was hospitalized for cellulitis. When I visited her at Mount Sinai Hospital, Mother turned aside her sheet and showed me her leg, which had turned a ghastly eggplant purple. Fortunately, the infection soon receded, after massive doses of antibiotics. Mother was not the easiest patient to deal with. Needing to use the bedpan or get other such assistance, she constantly had her finger on the button that rang at the nurses' station. After her discharge from the hospital, she told me that one of the nurses' aides, probably exasperated with Mother's demands for attention, had

entered the room, turned her backside to Mother, and “mooned” her. Mother reported the episode to the hospital but did not pursue it.

I will be forever grateful to Ben and his wife, Jacqueline, for their willingness to assume primary responsibility for Mother’s well-being. At that time, in the late 1980’s, they were on the faculty of the University of Connecticut at Storrs, northeast of Hartford. After making several trips to New York in response to emergency calls from Mother, Ben decided in 1989 that she could no longer live independently at such a distance from him. The six-hour round-trip car trips, always on short notice, were wearing him down. The alternative was to bring Mother to Storrs.

Ben found the solution for Mother, and for him, in a newly-built cooperative development just a five-minute drive from their house in Storrs: a ground-level apartment, well-suited to Mother’s needs, in a retirement community. The apartment in New York was sold at a favorable price, enabling Mother to buy the new place with money to spare. For Mother it meant a great change in her life. She, who had always lived in a major metropolis, first Berlin, then Madrid and Paris, and for 52 years in New York City, now found herself living in a quiet Eastern Connecticut village. It had its advantages: Ben and Jacqueline lived nearby, she had a patio overlooking the woods behind the cottage and the neighbors were solicitous of her welfare. From our home in New Haven, my wife and I were close enough to make frequent visits. Still, leaving behind family and her close circle of lifelong friends in New York City and the city’s cultural offerings required a major readjustment. She had no choice but to accept these changes.

After Mother had been for two years in that co-op apartment, years marked by increasing trips to hospital emergency rooms for outpatient care and for overnight stays, Ben decided that the next stage was at hand. Mother could not live independently, even with assistance. Her doctor confirmed that her weakening heart could no longer clear the congestion from her lungs; she needed the round-the-clock attention offered at a nursing home. Having determined that the Hebrew Home in West Hartford offered the best nursing home care in the area, Ben made arrangements to have Mother moved into the skilled care unit there. Poor Mother! She was miserable there. For her, as for so many others, that final loss of independence probably did her in.

By the time of her move into the Hebrew Home, I had moved from New Haven to the Washington, D.C. area and was living in Rockville, Maryland. On a trip back to New Haven, I drove further on up I-91 to see Mother at the Home and sat with her in the patient dining room as she ate. With its stark fluorescent lighting, its vinyl tile floors, its plastic and tubular metal furniture, the place was depressing even to the casual visitor. Mother nibbled desultorily at what was on the plate before her. She seemed to have no appetite for her food, nor for the prospect of continued life in this place. She complained constantly of her isolation there. The other women in the wing, she said, despised her. They belonged to the old-time Jewish families who had lived in Hartford since their parents and grandparents had come over from the shtetls of Eastern Europe. To them, Mother was a *Yekke*, a German Jew who, after fifty years in America, still spoke English with a noticeable German accent. Her kind, they might have felt, had always lorded it over their families. They seemed to stare balefully at her and froze her out of the little conversations that make life tolerable in such a place. Other than Ben and Jacqueline, who visited her regularly, her only steady visitor was my wife's aunt, Anna Harris (Auntie Annie), who lived at that time in the intermediate care unit of the Home. While her own family saw Annie as an officious meddler, Mother was grateful that this plainspoken simple woman cared enough about her to visit her regularly.

Six weeks after Mother entered the Home, the telephone rang at our house in Rockville. Mother was calling from the phone on her night-table. Her feeble voice, scarcely heard, signaled to me that she had some kind of respiratory infection. Her tone alone told me that this illness might be her last, that we had to go straight away to her bedside.

When we arrived, we found Ben and his wife, Jacqueline, and their daughter, Naomi, already at Mother's bedside, Mother lying supine, her skin a marble white, her eyes barely open. Her face bespoke a beautiful serenity. On the dresser against the wall across from the bed stood a menorah, its seven candles marking the seventh night of Chanukah. Each of us, Ben and I and our wives, had a few moments alone with her, sharing with her the things that need to be said at the end time. I knelt at her bedside. She, facing me, could open only one eye, giving me a wan smile, but, still, a smile suffused with love. Then, with all of us in the room, she

signaled that she had one final request. Ben leaned over the bed and said, "What is it, Mother? What do you want?" In a whisper, she said, "I want death." Ben and I embraced, aware of the finality of what was about to happen. Ben summoned the duty nurse. In our presence, she disconnected the intravenous tube from Mother's forearm. I felt no regret, no sorrow, on watching the nurse perform what I saw as a simple mechanical act that would bring Mother the eternal peace that she craved.

Immediately thereafter, we drove to Simsbury, to the home of my brother-in-law David Klau and his wife, Bobby. Later that evening, the night of December 8, 1991, the duty nurse at the Home called to tell us that Mother had "peacefully expired." The cause of death: congestive heart failure. When I returned to the Home on receiving that telephone call, Mother was lying supine, her features composed, her complexion pale but showing none of the gray-yellow pallor that often accompanies death. She seemed the embodiment of that beautiful passage from the Song of Songs: "I sleep, but my heart waketh."<sup>84</sup>

For many years, Mother had spoken of her death. Having lived with pain for so many years, she felt that she could not cope with extended and excruciating pain in the final stages of life. She expressed fervently the hope that she could pass on without having to endure that ordeal, as many others must. God must have heard those frequent pleas, because only three days elapsed from the time she called me on December 5th until the end. Death came quickly and mercifully, without the pain that she had dreaded.

Looking back on her life, Mother could be at peace with herself. She had made a powerful difference in many people's lives, had successfully raised her two sons and had attained self-understanding and peace. How many of us will be able to say as much on our deathbeds? When Death came, Mother did not resist it. She accepted it; indeed, she welcomed it.

It was left to Ben and me to make the funeral arrangements. I had helped to plan Grandmother's funeral in 1985 and my Aunt Judith's, who had died a year earlier, in 1990. This would be the third death in six years in which I would play a role in the planning of the funeral. The details were becoming all too familiar. First, there was the question of the place of burial. Should it be Hartford, where Mother had died, or New York? That decision came easily. For Mother, the Hartford area was only a brief stop on the way to

the final destination. There was no reason to leave her there for eternity. It seemed fitting that she be buried instead at Cedar Park Cemetery, where Father, Grandmother, Grandfather and Aunt Judith were also interred.

There was a funeral service at Gutterman's on Amsterdam Avenue in New York City. Ben and I had invited Rabbi Jospe to officiate, but he was too ill to make the trip to New York; he was to follow Mother in death within a year. Ironically, considering the many rabbis with whom she was associated over the years, among them R. Menachem Mendel Schneerson (the Lubavitcher Rebbe), R. Zalman Schachter, and Rabbi Shlomo Riskin of the Lincoln Square Synagogue, it was left to the funeral home to provide as an officiant a rabbi who had not known the deceased.

I addressed a few elegiac words to those assembled in the funeral chapel. Mother, I said, was not given to great shows of affection. Even so, there were never any doubts on my part or on Ben's of the central place that we had in her life, of her love for us and of her pride in us and in our families. I omitted from the eulogy my sense of deprivation, not from the absence of those overt signs of affection, but from our inability to get through to each other. Perhaps the fault was as much mine as hers.

From all over the country, friends, former students and colleagues sent condolences, speaking of Mother with awe and reverence in phrases echoing those that I had heard at her retirement dinner years earlier:

*"There are few people that come into my life that have left a lifelong impression—your Mother was such a gift to me."*

*"Despite the adversity she encountered—widowhood with two small children in a new country and no financial resources—she went on to professional and maternal success. You and your brother are proof of the latter."*

*"Our talks ran the full gamut of Judaism, philosophy, politics and people. We discussed everything from Kabbalah to current events, from Plato to the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization]."*

A Subud colleague recalled that Mother

*was one of the few people whom Bapak [the Indonesian founder of Subud] told that her original name was right for her—Leonie, the lion-hearted, a woman of great inner strength and endurance.*

That was true: Mother had dealt with staggering human loss, with tremendous emotional stress, with utter loneliness and with severe financial pressures. These might have broken a lesser woman or man. She had survived; she had endured; she had overcome.

As we waited for the limousines to take us from Gutterman's to the cemetery, Mother's brother Helmut Feiler, ever the realist, expressed wonderment that Mother had lived as long as she had. Despite her chronic ailments—the phlebitis, the allergies, the anemia, the nervous stomach, the diabetes—she had survived to age 83. Helmut himself was to die three years later, at the same age.

It has been a tradition in our family that the gravestone be incised with words from the Torah or from the *Siddur*, the prayer book. Since Mother had not expressed any preference as to the inscription on her gravestone, I took on the responsibility for making that selection. I chose a portion of the *Amidah*, also known as the *Shemona Esrei* (the “Eighteen Benedictions”): *Um'chayeh emunatoh lishayneb afar* (“He keeps faith with those who lie in the dust”). At every prayer service, Jews utter this prayer, first in silence, then aloud with the others in the congregation. I have taken great comfort from them in the years since Mother's death. When, standing in prayer in the synagogue, I recite those words, my mind and heart incline to Mother. As a teacher, friend, mentor and mother, she did more than was expected of her in the most difficult of circumstances, earning the love and respect of family, friends, and colleagues.

## SETTING THE SCENE

Anyone who has watched a black-and-white movie set in the New York City of the 1930's or 1940's will remember its "establishing shot," its opening frames. Comedies and dramas of that era often open with an aerial view, from thousands of feet up in the sky, of the densely packed skyscrapers of lower Manhattan. From there, the camera zooms in slowly, coming closer and closer to its destination. Gradually, it focuses on a cluster of skyscrapers, then on a single office building, hovering momentarily outside one set of windows before "stepping through" the windows into the office where the opening scene is to take place.

Now imagine that the camera, instead of homing in on an office in lower Manhattan, continues northward, past midtown, past Central Park and Harlem, to upper Manhattan, first to Washington Heights and then to Inwood. That might be the establishing shot, the opening scene of my life-movie, because it was there in Inwood that I spent my formative years.

Working class Irish immigrants were the first to be drawn to Inwood; parish churches and parochial schools had followed to meet their needs. By the mid-30's, German Jews had established a beachhead, which was to swell until, at the outbreak of World War II, some 50,000 of them had settled in the area. They brought with them their institutions—their synagogues, social service organizations and clubs, their kosher butcher shops, pastry shops and cafés. Although German Jews were never a majority in Washington Heights, the area had such a pervasively German-

Jewish flavor that it was jokingly referred to as “The Fourth Reich” or “Frankfurt on the Hudson.”

The German Jews were but one wave of immigrants who found a home in Washington Heights. In the 1970’s and 1980’s, the German-Jewish immigrants were dying off and their children, now with families of their own, had moved to the suburbs or out of the area altogether. The next wave of immigrants, from the Dominican Republic, left their imprint on Inwood just as their predecessors had. Instead of German, Spanish is now heard on the street, and *bodegas*, *carnicerías* and *agencias de viajes* have taken the place of the *Konditoreis* (pastry shops), the cafés and the kosher butchers. The Romans had a phrase for it: *Tempis mutantis et nos mutamur in illis* (“Times change and we change with them”). When my wife and I and our son George returned to the neighborhood in 2000, our visit coincided with Dominican Independence Day, marking that country’s independence from Spain. Stores and cars were festooned with the red, white and blue flag of the Dominican Republic; around their necks, men, women and children wore bandannas in the same colors. So it has ever been as successive waves of immigrants wash up upon these shores.

Another frequently used technique in those black-and-white suspense movies was the flashback. As a character spoke, the image slowly dissolved, becoming increasingly blurred and out of focus, sometimes spinning on its axis. As the image regained its focus, we understood (because we had seen the convention used so many times before) that we were in a flashback to an earlier day, showing, perhaps, the lead character as a small boy, so that we could better understand the events leading up to what we had just seen.

In our film of Inwood and our family’s years there, a flashback might take us back at least as far as the Revolutionary War, our War of Independence. American schoolchildren are fuzzy about the details of that conflict. They may have learned how the war began, of Bunker Hill and Paul Revere, of Fort Ticonderoga and Ethan Allen’s Green Mountain Boys, of the dreadful winter at Valley Forge and of the surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown. Few of them know of Fort Tryon, of Fort Washington and Inwood and their place in our history. Indeed, more recent generations of men, women and children have gone about their daily life in Washington Heights and Inwood unaware that hundreds of men fought and died where the present inhabitants now sleep, work, study and play.

Only American history buffs like me trouble to read the historic markers that tell the story. On my boyhood walks around the neighborhood, I was keen to read the bronze commemorative plaques placed by the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Society of the Cincinnati and other patriotic organizations. The markers told me that, at this place on this date, something of importance happened in American history or that this place was the home of a great American writer or painter. I read such plaques solemnly, feeling that I was standing on sanctified ground.

In the early days of the war, the northern end of Manhattan was the scene of bitter fighting between the British regulars and their Hessian mercenaries on one side and a small body of Americans, the latter fighting fiercely to give the main body of the Revolutionary Army time to escape from the island and regroup on the mainland. Professor Lowenstein<sup>85</sup> points out the historical irony: some 160 years after these events, Jewish refugees, fleeing from Nazi persecution, escaped from that same German state, Hesse, and found freedom in America. Now those refugees occupied apartments built on the land where Hessian soldiers had fought and died to deny freedom to an earlier generation of Americans.

The first years of the war saw continual armed confrontations between the opposing sides amid the farmlands and woodlands of Washington Heights and Inwood. The most important of these occurred on November 18, 1776 on what was then called Forest Hill, now Fort Tryon Park. The park is named for Sir William Tryon, the last royal governor of the New York colony. In what some have called the “Alamo” of the Revolutionary War, the outnumbered colonials dug in to defend the hill against the British troops approaching from the south and their Hessian allies, moving in from what is now the Bronx and attacking from the north.

In the final assault on the American position, a Pennsylvania man, John Corbin, was struck by a Hessian bullet. His wife, Margaret, had accompanied him to the field of battle, as many wives did in those days. When her husband fell back, mortally wounded, Margaret stepped up to the firing line, picked up his musket and fired it “with such ‘skill and vigor’ as to attract the attention of her officers and comrades,”<sup>85</sup> until she too was severely wounded and the position was overrun. Margaret Corbin’s bravery preceded by two years the better-known feats of the New Jersey

woman, Molly Pitcher. The historian of the neighborhood, Reginald Pelham Bolton, has written that Corbin “was the first American woman to shed blood in actual warfare in the defence of her country against British domination.”<sup>87</sup> Today, a bronze plaque commemorating Margaret Corbin’s heroism stands at the base of a flagpole atop the hillock that the Americans fought so hard to defend, and the automobile drive that winds from the park entrance north around the Cloisters bears her name.

From his position atop the palisades on the far side of the Hudson River in Fort Lee, General George Washington, peering through his spyglass, observed the defeat of his troops at the hands of the British and their Hessian mercenaries. He is said “to have shed tears as his glasses disclosed to him the rout and slaughter of his fellow Virginians.”<sup>88</sup>

The remnants of the American army, those who eluded the British, escaped across the river to fight again another day. The dead of both sides were buried where they lay, many of them in a long trench at what was to become the intersection of 181st Street and Fort Washington Avenue. Enraged at the deaths of their comrades-in-arms, the Hessians would have bayoneted the American captives as they marched from the redoubt under a white flag, but the British shielded the prisoners from that rude vengeance. Instead, they were marched down St. Nicholas Avenue and then down Broadway, to be transported from there to the infamous prison ships anchored in Upper New York Bay. Bolton rightly says:

*A really grateful country should find no effort too great, no expense undue, that should preserve for the benefit of future generations the ground on which these poor fellows labored, for which they fought, and in which were laid, unmarked by their foes, the bodies of those who died in defence of the charge committed to them.*<sup>89</sup>

The defeat of the Americans at Fort Washington cemented British control of Long Island, New York and Westchester. They would remain in possession of that area throughout the conflict, relinquishing the city only in the closing days of the war, in 1782.

Continuing with our “film” history of Inwood, we might now employ another technique made hoary from overuse. The camera focuses in tightly on an old day-by-day wall calendar, its pages flipped in a rapid blur to signify the forward movement of time. If

we were to do that in our survey of the history of upper Manhattan, the farm buildings, pastures and orchards that existed at the time of the Revolutionary War and for decades thereafter would yield, when the calendar page-flipping had stopped, to that later time when endless blocks of apartment buildings now stood in their place.

The first spurt of urban development in the neighborhood was a byproduct of the extension of the Seventh Avenue IRT line to upper Manhattan. After traveling underground for most of the length of the island, that line emerges into daylight at the north end of Fort George Hill and continues as an elevated line until it reaches its terminus at 242nd Street and Broadway in Riverdale. Dyckman Street is the first elevated stop after the subway emerges from the tunnel.

The urbanization of Inwood began in the streets nearest to the IRT station, on Nagle Avenue, Post Avenue and Sherman Avenue. As those were the first-built apartment houses in Inwood, they also lacked the amenities of the newer homes, hence had lower rents and attracted lower-income families who could not afford the newer buildings erected further west, nearer the Hudson River.

By 1937, when we arrived in Inwood, the wood-frame single-family houses that once dotted the area had yielded to block after block of apartment buildings. The newer buildings that lined Broadway and the newly laid-out streets running westward toward the Hudson River had many features lacking in the older buildings. They had elevators and reflected the then-popular Art Deco style, with corner casement windows, step-down lobbies with marble or terrazzo floors and chrome entry doors. Many of the apartments had step-down living rooms with wrought iron railings and the other modern conveniences which attracted Father on his visit to this country in the Spring of 1937.

Father marveled that these fine buildings, then newly opened for occupancy, could be had for what he considered very reasonable rents. He did not realize when he decided to rent there that Inwood was the destination for thousands of other Jews newly arrived as refugees from Hitler's Germany. That dawned on him only when he saw the numerous Jewish names listed in the apartment house lobby directories and the numbers of *mezuzahs* on the apartment door jambs. That Inwood was crowded with so many others like him and his family was certainly not what had drawn him there. It

was mildly disconcerting to Father that, having experienced life first in cosmopolitan Berlin and later in Madrid and Paris, he would now be moving to a ghetto of sorts in Washington Heights.

Inwood, and specifically the five blocks on each side, north and south, of Dyckman Street and an equal number of blocks east and west from the Hudson River to Tenth Avenue, was indeed our shtetl, our burg, our urban village or, to use the contemporary vernacular, our 'hood. It was not a ghetto in the medieval sense. No walls hemmed us in; no guards regulated our comings and goings. We were free to leave and return as we pleased, but we had no great need to. Inwood offered almost everything that a growing boy required in life.

Nor was Inwood unique in this respect. New York City is a tapestry of neighborhoods, each with its unique coloration. Even today, a native New Yorker will identify himself by saying, "I grew up in Chelsea," or Bensonhurst, or Kew Gardens, or Richmond Hill, not in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens or Staten Island. Or he might tell you of his childhood growing up on the Grand Concourse or on Arthur Avenue, Cortelyou Road or 63d Avenue. If you were knowledgeable about New York City and its neighborhoods, the addresses alone would tell you all you needed to know about his social status, his "crowd."

Among the advantages that Inwood offered to Ben and me in our childhood and teen years were its abundant recreational assets. Just a block away from our apartment were two playgrounds, one at the intersection of Broadway and Riverside Drive in Fort Tryon Park, another a block to the west, at Dyckman Street and Payson Avenue. They offered, in addition to the swings, monkey bars, slides and seesaws, a vertical sprinkler which was turned on in hot weather so that children, shrieking with excitement, could run back and forth, in and out of the shower. If you climbed to the top of Fort Tryon Park, you could visit the Cloisters, that splendid repository of medieval art built in the mid-1930's through the generosity of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., or stroll the formal gardens to the south of the museum.

Closer to our house was Inwood Hill Park. In contrast to Fort Tryon Park, with its carefully tended walkways and shrubbery, Inwood Hill Park was then, and remains today, more or less in its natural state. Henry Stern, a former New York Parks Commissioner, has referred to it as "Manhattan's wilderness" and,

because of its geographical isolation, “the park that nobody knows.”<sup>90</sup> After the Civil War, New York’s newly rich were drawn to this wilderness, with its commanding views of the Hudson River and the Palisades beyond, as the site for their summer homes. Isidor Straus, the retail magnate who went down with the *Titanic*, had an Italianate villa on those heights. So, too, did Jefferson Monroe Levy, a local lawyer and financier whose family had acquired the Jefferson home, Monticello, from Jefferson’s heirs. Also on the crest of the hill overlooking the river was the Refuge of Mercy, a notorious Episcopal home for unwed mothers and other outcasts from respectable society. The southern edge of the park, alongside Dyckman Street, was the original location of the Jewish Memorial Hospital. The Seamans, the Dyckmans and the Ishams, descendants of the original Inwood settlers, had their homes at the eastern edge of the park. These and other property owners donated their land to the City of New York in 1916 as the nucleus for what was to become Inwood Hill Park, 196 acres in all, including the last remnant of primeval forest in Manhattan.

This was the park that our parents and grandparents enjoyed for their afternoon promenades, or for just sitting and talking. In wintertime, we kids, as boys of 10 or 11, dragged our sleds to the highest point in the park, just south of the Clove, so-called because, in its narrow declivity, it resembles the cleft in an animal’s hoof. Here, the New York Times says, “almost magically, any and all signs of the city are shut off.”<sup>91</sup> At the top of the rise, a steep rock-bound hillside lies to the left, with rock ledges and overhangs still referred to today as the Indian Caves. To the right, a dense forest of tulip poplar trees rises straight up from the valley floor. We named the steep path downward into the valley “Dead Man’s Run.” In winter, after a heavy snowfall, we would start our sled runs at the top of the hill, then zoom downhill at breakneck speed toward Spuyten Duyvil. Unless we had veered off the path and banged up an elbow, a knee or other part of our body on the way down, we coasted, elated, across the “finish line,” then trudged back uphill and re-positioned our sleds for another run.

If you walked down Dyckman Street to its western terminus at the Hudson River and turned north, you were on what our family called “Der neuen Weg,” the New Way, so-called because it was completed just after we arrived, as part of Parks Commissioner Robert Moses’s ambitious Depression-era public works program.

Stretching northward between the Henry Hudson Parkway on the east and the river on the west, the New Way was a complex of riverfront walkways, softball fields and handball courts, made to order for strolling, sunbathing, fishing and more active sports.

When it came to shopping, Dyckman Street and Broadway also offered all that we needed. Most of the storekeepers knew us by name, took a paternal interest in us and kept their eyes on us. For many years, we took our laundry to the Sing Lee Laundry on Dyckman Street, around the corner from our apartment house. The proprietor, Sing Lee, was a short Chinese man, his moon-face pockmarked with smallpox scars. He and his employees, all immigrant men whom he had brought over from his province in China, cooked, ate and slept in the back of the store. When you brought in your shirts you had to put up with wok smells that wafted through the door separating the shop from the living quarters in the rear. Despite his meager life, Sing Lee always had a big snaggle-toothed smile for us when we entered the store. My mother once dropped a few coins into the box that Sing Lee kept next to the cash register for the relief of Chinese war refugees. Sing Lee was so grateful that he refused to accept payment when he brought the next delivery of clean shirts back to our apartment.

The Jacobsons, husband and wife, owned the cigar store next door to Sing Lee. No welcoming grin greeted kids at the Jacobsons' smoke shop, unless they were in the company of adults. The Jacobsons would cast a suspicious glance in our direction as soon as we stepped into the store and never once take their eyes off us. As a result, we learned not to shop there. Instead, we frequented the friendlier candy-and-cigar store operated by Mr. Stein, on Dyckman Street just west of Seaman Avenue. There we could buy our penny candies and our Dixie Cup ice creams and browse through the comic books without buying them.

Just east of the subway entrance, at the corner of Broadway and Dyckman Street, was the Gans Pharmacy, where we had our prescriptions filled. The owner, Dr. (of Pharmacy) Herbert Gans, acted as a kind of neighborhood first-aid center. He was always ready to spread iodine or mercurochrome on skinned knees. More than once, I ducked into the store to have Doc Gans remove a speck from my eye.

Further north on Broadway was the store of Laskavy the tailor. Laskavy was a White Russian, short, totally bald, with a high, shiny

dome, and bushy black eyebrows. His sewing table was at the store window, just inside the front door. He'd be working at the machine, focused entirely on his work, but as you passed by he would look up and give you a friendly smile and a wave of the hand.

Next to Laskavy was the Profeta Barber Shop, its electrified red, white and blue barber pole standing sentry on the sidewalk outside. Sitting in the barber chair, there was much to attract my attention: my mirror image multiplied to infinity in the reflection between the mirror in front of me and the mirror on the rear wall, hair clippings of every shade and texture on the floor, the leather razor strop hanging from the chair, the bottles of Dickinson's Witch Hazel on the counter, the exotic hairdrying machines in the rear.

We ventured beyond Dyckman Street to reach specific destinations such as our school, P.S. 152, on Nagle Avenue, our synagogue, Ohav Sholaum, on Sherman Avenue, or the post office on Vermilyea Avenue. Sometimes we traveled south as far as 181st Street to shop at Wertheimer's Department Store or to go to the movie theatres there, or we went northward to the Loew's theatre on 207th Street, down near 10th Avenue. We always had the feeling, as we ventured to places like these, hardly a mile from our house, that this was someone else's "turf," not ours.

As we got older, our horizons broadened. Among the interesting places that were now open to our exploration were abandoned culverts under the Henry Hudson Parkway. A friend and I cautiously walked farther and farther into the culvert, water seeping through the concrete overhead and dripping on our heads and shoulders. At length, when we could no longer see the entrance behind us, our appetite for adventure faded; we retreated and nervously retraced our steps to the opening.

Running south from the western end of Dyckman Street at the Hudson River shoreline was a string of boatyards that had probably been there for decades. As boys, we liked to go down the rutted dirt road that ran past the rotting wharves and rundown boathouses. Two centuries earlier, when Upper Manhattan was dotted with farms and virgin woodland, there had been a little fishing village here, Tubby's Hook. Later, the men who owned the large estates on the bluff overlooking the river had moored their yachts at these wharves. No luxury yachts and schooners were tied up here now, just a few dilapidated houseboats and small dinghies with ancient

outboards at the stern, the pleasure craft of working-class New Yorkers.

At the foot of Dyckman Street was a fishing pier, sagging into the river even in my boyhood, where fishermen tended their lines for hours on end. In those years, when the Hudson was polluted beyond measure, the only things that the fishermen had to show for their patience at the end of the day were buckets of eels. Not far from the pier, at the foot of Dyckman Street, a few rotted pilings were all that remained of a ferry slip. Here the ancient ferry had docked that plied the Hudson River between that pier and another at the foot of the Palisades in Englewood, New Jersey. In the years just after our arrival in America, we sometimes packed a picnic lunch and boarded the ferry to the New Jersey side of the river. There we staked out a picnic table and ate our sandwiches and our potato salad before returning to New York. The ferry was discontinued in 1942, a few years after the completion of the George Washington Bridge downriver at 178th Street made the slower ferry crossing obsolete.

Beyond Nagle Avenue, along the north side of Dyckman Street, stretched acres and acres of junkyards and, beyond them, the subway marshaling yards. Until the late 1930's, before the junkyards took over, there had been a baseball stadium, Dyckman Oval, at 204th Street and Tenth Avenue. After his career in the major leagues had ended, the Sultan of Swat, Babe Ruth, played there in an exhibition game against the New York Cuban Stars. Satchel Paige, the famous Negro League pitcher and one of the pioneer African-Americans in major league baseball, made an appearance there as well. After the war, the whole area was developed as the site of Dyckman Houses, acres of institutional and impersonal high-rise public housing.

Inwood was more than buildings, stores and open space; it had a vibrant street life. As I walked to school in the early morning, horse-drawn wagons were pulled up to the curb on Seaman Avenue. Their drivers, salesmen for Sheffield Farms Co., were making deliveries of bottled milk and other dairy products on their routes. Shopkeepers were pushing back the grates that had secured their storefronts the night before and were energetically sweeping the sidewalks in front of their stores. Once or twice a week, municipal water trucks would move slowly down the streets, blasting water under high pressure against the curbs to keep the

streets clean. You could get a good soaking if you didn't get out of the way in time. If a coal truck was making a delivery, you had to detour around it, out into the street, because the sidewalk was blocked by the trough down which the coal was sliding into the building's coal bin.

Later in the day, walking home from school and careful to avoid dog leavings and the cracks in the sidewalk ("Step on a crack, break your mother's back," was the time-honored superstition), I might encounter old women doing their shopping, pulling wire carts or toting string bags for their groceries, and salesmen with their sample cases. Girls played hopscotch on squares marked with chalk on the sidewalk; boys coasted down the hilly streets on roller skates; little kids cavorted on scooters. Some of the scooters were homemade, just a pair of roller skates attached to the front and rear of a board that made a crude floor and an orange crate, stood up on end, at the front of the board to hold onto. Older and braver kids on roller skates would grab onto a trolley and move down Broadway at a good clip as the trolley pulled them down the tracks.

In front of the grocery store on Dyckman Street, I would pass boys my age getting ready to make a delivery of food, loading the wire baskets of their bicycles with grocery bags. At the corner of Dyckman Street and Seaman Avenue a photographer might take photos of children astride his donkey. In warm weather, too, a truck with a small carousel mounted behind the cab might be parked at the corner, its recorded calliope music blaring out the familiar New York theme song, "East Side, West Side, all around the town. . ." as little children rode its ornately-caparisoned horses.

Then, entering the courtyard of our apartment building at 11 Seaman Avenue, I might encounter the peddlers for whom our building was a regular stop on their route. Each of them had his unique call: the old clothes peddler would call out "Buy cash clothes . . . buy cash clothes." On other days, from our fourth-floor apartment, I would hear through the open window the knife-and-scissors sharpener, calling out for business, the organ grinder with his monkey, or the scruffy musician who played his gypsy melodies on the violin as we tossed coins to him from our apartment windows.

In summer heat, in the days before air conditioning, every window was kept open as high as it could go. From the street, you could see, through open kitchen windows, the women doing their

domestic chores. There was much yelling back-and-forth between the kids in the streets and their mothers upstairs. To communicate, our family used the “family whistle” (the notes d-b-g-d) that we had used in Germany and that Father had used to connect with his father when we first came off the ship in August 1937. This four-note sequence, selected by Grandfather, comes from an aria sung by Elektra in Richard Strauss’s one-act opera of that name, as she calls out “A-ga-mem-non!”<sup>92</sup> Now, standing in the courtyard at 11 Seaman Avenue, we used those four notes not to express the agony felt by a tragic figure in Greek mythology but for the mundane purpose of calling Mother to the window when we had something to tell her and didn’t want to climb the stairs.

Recalling their growing-up years in cities elsewhere in the world, other men have memories similar to mine, of “*the store in the street, the door to a house, a particular whistle or street seller’s refrain.*”<sup>93</sup>

Saturday was shopping day on Dyckman Street because, in those days of the so-called “blue laws,” the stores were closed on Sunday. If, as a younger boy, I needed new trousers at the start of the school year, Mother took me to Jack’s Pants at the lower end of Dyckman Street. There the pants and jackets hung on hangers from pipe racks that ran along the ceiling. When you picked out the pants that you wanted to try on, Jack used a long pole with a hook at the end of it to reach up and lift them from the rack. For new shoes we went to Miles, on the other side of the street. The salesmen there made sure that there was room for growing feet in the new shoes by taking an X-ray of your feet with the new shoes on. You stood in front of these shoe-fitting fluoroscopes, as they were called, you pushed your feet into the openings and the salesman “took a picture.” The X-ray showed the bones of your feet in dense white and the outline of the shoes more faintly. Those machines were taken out of service when the shoe retailers were told of the danger of constant exposure to the X-rays—the danger to the patrons, yes, but even more so to the salesmen who were exposed day in and day out to the radiation from those machines.

Returning home from the far end of Dyckman Street, we might pass stores that catered to the women of the neighborhood: Klein’s fur shop, a ladies’ apparel store, the corsetiere and the millinery shop. We might stop at the Woolworth’s 5¢ and 10¢ store, looking for notions, stationery and school supplies or inexpensive china. At the conclusion of our Saturday shopping expedition, we sometimes

paused for a late afternoon treat at Nash's *Konditorei*, a little island of Berlin, Vienna and Frankfurt right there on Dyckman Street. I would stand transfixed in front of the refrigerated display case, taking in the abundance of chocolate, whipped cream and berries on the *Linzertorten*, the *Sachertorten*, the *éclairs* and the *napoleons*. On Saturday afternoons, Nash's was crowded with older men and women, taking their *Eiskaffee mit Schlagsahne* (iced coffee with whipped cream) and nibbling on *hörnchen* (mini-croissants) and *apfelstrudel*. Bless their hearts: these people never let concerns about their weight or their arteries get in the way of their enjoyment of the bourgeois pleasures.

Some places on Dyckman Street were off-limits to us: the billiards parlor at the corner of Sherman Avenue and Dyckman Street, and Tiernan's Tavern, an Irish bar a block up the street. We were sure that both these places catered to disreputable elements. In warm weather, when the door to the bar was open, the odor of stale beer wafted out to the sidewalk from Tiernan's dimly-lit interior. The bar patrons were Irish-Americans taking a nip before returning home from work, older men, retired, and, perhaps, younger men, unemployed, come over on the boat from the Ould Sod. Jews did not set foot in such places.

Nor did we ever enter Sarafian's Jewelers, across the street from Tiernan's. In addition to rings, pins and other such baubles, Sarafian offered an impressive selection of diamond and gemstone crucifixes, bejeweled missal covers, rosaries and Lladro bisque sculptures of the Virgin and Child. I do not recall ever seeing a *magen david* [Jewish star] on a gold chain, mezuzahs or other such specifically Jewish items in Sarafian's store windows. It was not only the religious wares that turned us away from Sarafian's but its prices as well. Whatever jewelry Mother and Grandmother owned they had brought over from "the other side." There was no reason to buy from Sarafian.

Mother would shop for groceries on weekends or after coming home from work in the late afternoon. Until the first supermarket opened on Broadway after the war, she had to shop separately for meats at the butcher shop on Broadway and for fruits and vegetables at the produce market on Dyckman Street. The grocer, Mr. D'Onofrio, picked out the fruit and produce for his customers, placing each in a separate bag. Then, using the pencil stub that he

kept tucked over his ear, he toted up the price of each bag on the largest one, the one that the housewife would carry home.

When the first supermarket, a Grand Union, opened its doors on Broadway in 1947, Inwood residents welcomed it as a marvel of modern convenience. Now, unless you still preferred the fresh cuts of meat at the butcher shop and the fresh produce at the grocery, you could bring your selections to the cashier in front to be bagged and checked out, a revolutionary notion at that time. The shelves that lined the walls slanted downward and were stocked from the rear, with new cans and boxes added at the top of the incline by clerks working behind the walls. As the customer took one can from the bottom of the incline, the other cans slid down to the bottom in turn. That system worked well unless you changed your mind after grabbing a can. You felt duty-bound to put the can back from where you had taken it, at the bottom of the trough, but it was the Devil's own work to try to push all the cans back upwards to make room for the one you were replacing. The Grand Union chain soon dispensed with that method of restocking its shelves and reverted to level shelves, stocked from the aisles as stores have always done and as they still do today.

That Grand Union, a pioneering concept in food marketing when it opened in 1947, has long since disappeared, as have the other stores of my childhood, their proprietors and their patrons with them. Gone too is the German-Jewish culture that gave Dyckman Street in the 1940's and 50's its unique flavor. The boys and girls with whom I grew up have long since burst out of that ghetto to Scarsdale, Larchmont and Teaneck, or to places even farther removed from the old neighborhood, to Cambridge, Berkeley, Ann Arbor and Washington, and other points north, south and west. The Inwood I knew as a boy has become only another stratum of time in the centuries-long history of northern Manhattan.

Now that the camera has finished its slow pan around my neighborhood, it's time to "step through the window."

## WITHIN THOSE WALLS

The years immediately after my father's death must have been terrible for Mother. She had her loneliness to contend with and the everyday concerns of caring for two small boys without a helpmeet. There were the soul-searing financial concerns as well. Mother had to support herself and her two sons on her salary alone, and a meager one it was. Her job at the International Auxiliary Language Association paid \$1,500 per year, a lowly sum even in those years. The monthly apartment rent of \$45 must have seemed almost unmanageable. Fortunately for Mother and her sons, a community of relatives and friends came to the rescue, among them "angels" who stepped forward to help Mother financially and emotionally in her time of need. One such angel paid Mother's rent for several years. In the best traditions of Jewish philanthropy, the donor remained anonymous; Mother learned only years later that the "angel" was Alice Schultz, a dear friend to Grete Wolff and to Mother as well.

Added to the financial pressures was the horror of watching from a distance the fast-approaching calamity in Europe. Mother's sister, my aunt Stefanie (Steffi), was able at the last minute to leave Germany for England, there to await the next leg of her journey to the United States. When she was finally able to book passage for America in November 1939, the war had begun. Her ship was escorted across the Atlantic by British destroyers under strict blackout throughout the journey. After that nerve-wracking voyage, she landed safely in Montreal. There she and the other arrivals were met by representatives of the Jewish community in that city. The following day, they saw to it that she was placed on the right train

for New York. As a result, she entered America through the back door, so to speak; she did not have the uplifting experience of entering New York harbor and passing the Statue of Liberty. Steffi had left behind in Berlin her fiancé, Heinz Behrend, a young man originally from Stettin, a city northeast of Berlin. On the night of February 12, 1940, some six months after the war began, Behrend was among 1,500 Jews from Stettin who were transported to Lublin, in southeastern Poland, and killed there.

And what of my paternal greatgrandmother, Clara Lewin, and her oldest daughter, Gertrud (Tante Trudchen) Marcuse Landsberg? In 1937, with the war clouds gathering on the horizon, they had visited Clara's middle daughter, Trudchen's sister Herta, in Palestine. As their visit drew to a close, Herta urged them not to return to Germany; "Stay here!", she had implored them. But Trudchen felt duty-bound to return to Germany to care for her ailing husband, Dr. Leo Landsberg, and Clara felt compelled to return with Trudchen. So they came back to Germany, there to meet their fate. Five years later, on September 24, 1942, Clara Lewin and her daughter were deported to Theresienstadt (Terezin) in Czechoslovakia.

Theresienstadt was the showplace of Nazi concentration camps, the destination for well-known and well-connected German Jews, but survivors have called it "the antechamber to hell." The International Red Cross, when it inspected the camp, always came away with positive reports of the excellent conditions under which the inmates were kept. Theresienstadt was, however, a Potemkin village. The international inspectors saw only what the Nazis wanted them to see.<sup>94</sup> The inspectors did not see, or chose not to see, the unsanitary conditions that permitted the spread of typhus and other contagious diseases. It was typhus that took my great-grandmother's life in 1943, at the age of 84. On April 5, 1944, Tante Trudchen followed her in death. They were among the 20,000 who, according to the *Theresienstadt Gedenkbuch* (Memorial Book), perished at the camp. Sixteen thousand others were shipped from Theresienstadt to the death camps and perished there.

Also caught up in the Holocaust was my mother's mother, Elisabet Feiler. As the widow of a decorated veteran of World War I, she had stayed behind in Germany, believing that she was immune from the Nazi anti-Jewish measures because of her husband's service for the Fatherland. It was true that in the early

years of the Nazi regime, much of the restrictive legislation which limited Jews in the exercise of their civil, economic and social rights exempted Jewish war veterans and their widows.

When my family obtained its visas for America in 1937, Elisabet Feiler remained optimistic that the gathering storm would pass her by, even suggesting that her children would soon be asking her for documents to ease their return to Germany. Before long, however, war broke out in Europe and now she sent letters to her son in Bolivia, pleading for help in escaping from Germany. She knew that her daughter in New York (my mother) would not respond to her desperate appeals. Newly widowed, Mother had not only to deal with the many stresses of her life under terribly straitened circumstances, but would have had to face the prospect of becoming the emotional and financial support of the mother from whom she had been alienated for fifteen years. She just could not bring herself to do it.

We know something of the last years of Elisabet Feiler's life from a letter that Anna Blank, a Christian friend of hers, wrote to my mother on September 24, 1946, 18 months after the war's end. An earlier chapter of this book includes a lengthy letter from Irene Sachs, my paternal grandmother, written to her mother, describing those first unforgettable days of her arrival on these shores, concluding with her release from confinement on Ellis Island and her embarkation into a new life of freedom in America. As Frau Blank described them, the last years of my other grandmother, Elisabet Feiler, were very different, ending not in freedom but in death.

Frau Blank's husband had been in the same military unit with my grandfather, Hermann Feiler, in the First World War. The two men and their wives became fast friends. Then, in the 1920's, the Blanks moved away from Berlin and lost touch with Elisabet Feiler, now widowed. In her letter to my mother, Anna Blank tells how she came to renew her friendship with Frau Feiler during the war years:

*Reading about the decrees against the Jews, I thought often about your Mom. I thought she was still living in comfortable circumstances and did not realize that she, too, had lost everything. Then, when I heard in 1942 that those who had a "J" symbol stamped on their ration card were very meagerly supplied with food, I couldn't hold myself back. I looked for your mother's apartment and our joy was great when we saw each other again after all*

*those years. It was very painful to see that your Mother had lost everything except what she had in that tiny apartment. However, she was content and wished only that she might be left alone in her apartment and that she might see her children again.*

*The suitcase stood against the wall, already packed [in accordance with Nazi instructions that all Jews be ready to leave for “resettlement” on short notice]. She hoped, though, that it wouldn’t come to that. I made every effort to confront the issue, but was unsuccessful. I told your Mom that she should come live with us. Since we lived alone and at a distance from the nearest neighbor, we could hide her. She refused and said that it was always open to her to put an end to it all, but that she would follow the path that destiny had laid out for her. After that first visit I came back every four weeks and was able to bring with me some really nice food, such as butter, eggs, apples and even roast duck (impossible today!). So in any case your Mom didn’t go hungry. She also told me that the shopkeepers were very understanding and secretly stuck food beyond her rations into her bags. We passed many warm and friendly hours together. On one of my visits, I saw that one of the two sisters who lived as lodgers with her had been taken away. We were very upset, but we continued to hope that your Mom might be spared that fate.*

*Unfortunately, it didn’t come out that way. In the spring of 1943 I had an operation and received no answer to the letters that I wrote her from the hospital. As soon as I could after my discharge, I went to Lietzenburgerstrasse 8 [Elisabet Feiler’s address] and there my worst fears were confirmed. Your Mom was no longer there. Now a family named Oggenheim was living there; they told me that the apartment had been sealed up and turned over to them and that they knew nothing of your Mom’s whereabouts . . . I couldn’t find out any more information other than that your Mom had been taken away in July 1943. Other than that, nobody knew anything. No one had seen her being led away. We had promised each other that she would write me if she were taken away, but since then I have had no word from her.*

*You wanted to know about your Mother’s state of mind. She was calm, composed and confident and believed strongly in a universal reunion [of souls] . . . In the hope that I might hear again from your Mom (she wanted to see me again as soon as possible) I will close, because God often moves in wonderful ways!*

There was to be no further word from Elisabet Feiler. Destiny’s path, as she had referred to it in her conversation with Anna Blank,

was to lead her to the fate shared with millions of other Jews. She was taken with other Berlin Jews to the train station at Grünewald, a suburb of Berlin, “for resettlement in the East.” At the station, she turned in her *sparbuch*, her savings passbook, to the Nazi authorities. There would be no need for that passbook where she was going. The destination was Lublin, where the newly-arrived German Jews were forced into the ghetto along with the thousands of Jews already living there.<sup>95</sup> After some months in Lublin, enduring the unspeakable conditions in its ghetto, Elisabet Feiler was in all likelihood herded, with thousands of other Jews, into trucks bound for the final destination, the Maidanek death camp. In the official language of the International Red Cross report, she is listed only as “*verschollen*” (missing), but, as a woman then 59 years old, she would have been among those who, immediately on stepping from the trucks, were directed to the gas chambers.

Fix in your mind the photographs that you may have seen of Jewish women arriving at the death camps. Naked, they run past leering German soldiers on their way to the gas chambers. It is so painful that you want to avert your eyes, even from the photograph. My grandmother, Elisabet Feiler, might have been one of those women.

From our own vantage point, decades later, it is comforting to learn the date and place of death of loved ones. It provides what the grief counselors today refer to as “closure.” But we shrink from learning more than that, and we are grateful that we do not know the gruesome details of the arrival at Maidanek, the “selection” of those who were marched off to the forced labor camps and those who were designated for immediate extermination. We are left to speculate, if we choose to do so, on Elisabet Feiler’s thoughts as she was “processed” for resettlement. We know from Anna Blank’s letter that she had been offered the opportunity to go into hiding and had turned it down. It gives us solace to know that she faced her future calmly, fully composed, and determined to accept, stoically and with dignity, whatever lay in store for her. Most likely, Elisabet Feiler and the millions like her understood that they were caught up in the workings of a giant liquidation machine. It was her destiny and theirs to die this way and not at an advanced age in a hospital or at home.

The guilt that Mother bore for turning her back on her mother in her hour of mortal need oppressed her for the rest of her life,

but, in her situation in the years 1939-1942, it must have seemed to her that she had no alternative. Thousands of newly-arrived refugees faced the same dilemma and would be tortured by the same guilt, the guilt of the survivor. Years later, the pioneer Holocaust historian Raoul Hilberg recalled his father's guilt at leaving his brother Josef behind:

*My father, by then in New York, received Josef's frantic appeals for help, but there was no money for tickets which might have enabled Josef to escape to America. When the deportations from the Vichy France zone began in 1942, Josef disappeared. 'The blood of my brother is upon me,' my father would say.<sup>96</sup>*

Gerda Lerner, historian and activist in the American women's movement of the 1960's and 70's, experienced that same survivor-anguish. Growing up in Austria, she had already escaped to America when her mother

*begged Gerda repeatedly for help in escaping the nightmare engulfing Europe. Gerda tried very hard to get her mother in under the quota system. Yet at a crisis point in the situation of a mother who had always, always, put her own desires first, even leaving her teenage daughters behind as fascism swept through Europe to move to another country to paint, the daughter now made her own "decisive turning—toward selfishness."<sup>97</sup>*

Instead of staying on the East Coast to press her mother's petition for a visa, Gerda Lerner eloped to Reno. The reviewer calls this "the most painful and protracted trauma of Lerner's life." Lerner herself writes of the "*unfinished business with the dead [that] continues for the rest of our lives,*" calling the guilt of the survivor "*the crippling . . . fatal disease you carry with you as long as you live.*"<sup>98</sup>

Many refugees, Professor Anthony Heilbut writes,

*were caught between a survivor's guilt and persistent hatred of those who died. How does one think about someone who troubled one's life and then happened to die horribly?<sup>99</sup>*

That's how it must have been for Mother as well. The guilt she felt at abandoning her mother haunted her in later life, to be resolved, if at all, only through years of intensive psychoanalysis.

After Father died, my mother, now on her own and anxious to put the bittersweet memories behind her, found a new apartment further up Payson Avenue, at No. 119. This was a more modern

building, in the Art Deco style, cream-colored brick with rust-colored bands, casement windows, and the brushed-chrome entry doors typical of that period. While the building was newer and the apartment larger, it had its disadvantages. It was farther from the subway entrance and from the stores on Dyckman Street, and it required a steep uphill walk from Dyckman Street to our apartment building in summer heat and winter's icy winds.

At 119 Payson, Ben and I had a succession of mothers' helpers, whom Mother hired to be there for us when school was over and she had not yet returned from work. There were two, Rosie and Frieda, to whom I, as a boy of 6 or 7, was especially attached. I was devastated when these loving women gave notice and Mother had to find someone to take their place. During one such screening for a mother's helper, a Mrs. Sinclair came to our apartment to be interviewed. She was dressed severely, in a navy-blue checked skirt and a white silk blouse with a large bow at the throat, and wore her grey-blonde hair tightly pulled back in a chignon at the back of her head. While Ben and I listened from the adjoining room, Mrs. Sinclair began to berate Mother about her child-rearing practices, reducing Mother to tears. Ben and I were crying, too, crying tears of rage at Mrs. Sinclair, as we rushed in to console Mother and reassure her. Ms. Sinclair left the house quickly, unwilling to work in an apparently dysfunctional family. Mother, just as clearly, had no use for Mrs. Sinclair.

We lived at 119 Payson Avenue from 1940 through 1943. Then we moved to 11 Seaman Avenue, where I lived until I finished college in 1955. That building was built around a large landscaped inner court, with eight separate entries, four to the south of the main entrance, four to the north. It must have reminded Mother of Calle Gaztambide 17, our apartment house in Madrid. That building, too, had been arranged around an inner court very much like this one. It would have been a very forward-looking design in its day, because it ensured that every apartment had at least two exposures, in our case to the east and west. Cross-ventilation, everyone knew, was very important in those days before air-conditioning.

One entered the apartment house through a large archway into the inner court. Our entry, No. 11, was the first one on the left, immediately after entering the courtyard, and our apartment was on the fourth floor. Since this was a walk-up, with no elevator, we did a

great deal of stair-climbing and stair-descending in the years we lived there. I had a recurring nightmare of being chased down those stairs, and, to escape from my pursuer, flying like Superman down the stairs from the landing above to the one below.

In our new apartment Ben and I shared the only bedroom; Mother slept in the living room. By today's standards, this would be considered overcrowding, but in those years it was not unusual for families even larger than ours to crowd together in an apartment of that size. A larger apartment simply wasn't affordable. Many families took in lodgers to make ends meet. Others had to provide temporary shelter for friends and relatives newly arrived in this country. In any event, we never knew any other living arrangements than the one we were in: the three of us in a three-room apartment. To have a separate bedroom for Mother would have been an unimaginable luxury; to have separate bedrooms for Ben and me would have been nothing short of a flight of fantasy. Undoubtedly, the lack of personal space, the absence of a sanctuary when one wanted to be alone, was a major source of the tensions that beset our family.

After passing through the front door to the apartment, one entered a small foyer, giving off to the kitchen on the right. On a nail in the foyer wall hung the *pushke* (charity box), in the colors of Zion, pale blue with white Hebrew lettering. Into the *pushke* we dropped coins for the Keren Hayesod (the United Israel Appeal), the coordinating body for Jewish philanthropy in Palestine and, later, in Israel. That was our introduction, at a very young age, to the Biblical mandate of *tzedakah*, charity. Straight ahead was the room that served as Mother's study and sitting room by day, her sleeping room at night. Father had inherited from his grandfather, Louis Lewin, the ornately carved oak furniture in that room: two oak bookcases, one high, with six shelves, the other, credenza height; the library table, which was used for dinner when guests were present, and the ornate oak twin-pedestal desk with its green leather top, an elaborate array of drawers, shelves and secret compartments, in front of it the elaborately carved desk chair with its upholstered seat and back. On the lower bookcase stood Mother's two silver Shabbat candlesticks; a large framed reproduction of Van Gogh's "Harvest" hung on the wall above.

Hanging on one side of the taller bookcase, directly on our right as we entered the room, was that small five-by-seven photo of

Father referred to earlier. The photo was like a Greek Orthodox icon. I regarded it with reverence and was convinced as a boy that Father's eyes were following me as I passed him by. That photo was iconic for Mother as well. That's why it was there. A friend recalled after Mother died that, one afternoon, while visiting Mother in our apartment, she had asked her about that photograph. Mother, she remembered, "looked up at the picture and her expression changed and softened and for a moment all the years fell away and I saw her as a young, beautiful woman looking at her beloved. It was a remarkable moment for me."

On the far wall of Mother's room, next to the library table, was her bed, made up during the day with a fitted cover. To alleviate Mother's severe phlebitis, the front legs of the bed were raised on blocks specially made for that purpose, so that, in lying down, Mother's legs would be elevated above her torso. The bed was lowered only when Mother had company, then raised again. Many were the times that Ben and I strained to lift up the bed, first to kick the blocks away and then to kick them back into position under the legs of the bed after the guests had left.

At the side wall, on each side of the lower bookcase, were taller ebony-stained bookcases, each shelf with its own glass door. One bookcase contained the older and more valuable books in Mother's library. The other, with its curtains tightly shirred behind the glass doors, Mother used for her lingerie. On the floor was a room-sized Oriental rug, now threadbare, that had been on the floor of great-grandfather Louis Lewin's study some 30 years earlier. There was no space in that room for an upholstered sofa or club chairs. When Mother entertained, the guests simply drew their chairs around in a circle and talked while hors d'oeuvres were passed around. The lack of conventional upholstered sofas and club chairs in no way hindered the conversation.

Beyond Mother's room was a hallway leading, at one end, to the bathroom and, at the other end, to the bedroom which Ben and I shared. Mother's room was separated from that hallway by a heavy blue curtain, which was drawn at night or when guests were being entertained in Mother's room. Many were the nights when I "had to go real bad," but "held it in" because I didn't want to traipse past the drawn blue curtain to the bathroom and come to the attention of the guests in Mother's room.

In our bedroom, Ben's and mine, the furnishings were Spartan. Our beds, metal folding cots, were on opposite walls. Next to my bed was the simple dresser brought over from Germany. As an infant, I had slept in a drawer from that dresser, the drawer supported at each end by a straight chair. This was not an unusual sleeping arrangement in those days. Ruth McBride recalled to her son that, when they lived in Harlem, four of her children slept in one room, with dresser drawers as their cribs.<sup>100</sup>

Also in our room, during the early years, were a *schiebeschrank* (literally, “sliding closet”), a low piece of furniture with sliding doors and one or two shelves inside which we used to stow away our toys and games, and a low chair, wide, with caned seat and legs shorter than usual. German mothers would sit in such a chair while nursing their newborns. Perhaps Mother had nursed Ben and me while sitting on that very chair. At the far end of the room were two windows, one leading onto the fire escape, and between the windows, in our teen years, a small desk.

In those two apartments, 119 Payson Avenue and 11 Seaman Avenue, I spent the largest part of my childhood and adolescence; there I slept, ate most of my meals, studied, played and endured the tensions that can exist between mother and son and, especially, between two brothers. “Endured” is an apt word. Yes, Ben and I were companions at times. It was Ben who taught me how to ride a bicycle. We were allies in fights with neighborhood bullies. But we also fought constantly, sibling rivalry writ large, even into our mid-teens. Oftentimes, a small remark, a jibe, would launch us into physical confrontation. As we got older and stronger, our fighting grew more hurtful, physically and emotionally. It undoubtedly harmed our psyches; it certainly damaged the furniture and possessions in our bedroom. If Mother was home when the fighting erupted, she would run screaming into the bedroom and pull us apart. If it happened while she was away, we stopped on our own, sensing that we had caused enough damage and aware that serious harm could result if the fighting continued.

Mother did her best to raise us, but we lived our lives in parallel, and not intertwined. As small boys, Ben and I loved Mother without qualification. We wanted her to be proud of us, and that motivated us to do well in school. The gap between us opened, as it does in so many families, when I entered adolescence. She had not raised me to consult her or ask her advice, to “talk things out” with

her, nor, after I became a teenager, to ask her permission for anything. I did not learn from Mother the fine art of conversation, of oral give-and-take, of expressing feelings and voicing opinions. As a teenager, I made my own decisions, my own choices, and informed my mother after the fact of what I had decided to do.

When we acted up and pressures started heading toward the boiling point, Mother's solution was to bring in a professional third party. In my early teens, she arranged for me to see Emmanuel (Manny) Hallowitz, a counselor at the Jewish Board of Guardians (predecessor of the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services) on East 149th Street in the Bronx. Hallowitz was an effective therapist, who listened to this confused teenager with wisdom and understanding. Later, he entered academia, and was for many years on the faculty of the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration.

I remember only one time when Mother responded very dramatically to something I had done, when she showed real passion toward me, albeit non-verbally. What I had done, now long-forgotten, so infuriated her that she flailed out with both fists, pounding on my body and screaming in anger. Even as I huddled on my bed, trying to ward off Mother's blows, I wondered that what I had done had stirred Mother to such uncharacteristic rage. Could my actions, now forgotten, have been the "last straw" in a series of such behaviors? Only such a surmise can explain that fury, and for how it played out on that day.

Just as I did not share my inner feelings with Mother, she did not open the window into hers. During my high school years, Mother told me that she had received a marriage proposal from Mr. Davidson, the widower who lived with his teen-age son, Frank, in the apartment directly above ours. She had turned him down. It came as a surprise to me at the time that a man could show that kind of interest in her, although she was still an attractive woman. To my knowledge, they had never gone out together, and I was fairly certain that he had never been in our apartment. It surprised me, as well, that Mother would reject him, when marriage might in many ways have made life easier for her. Perhaps she was concerned that we boys would have difficulty adjusting to a stepfather and stepbrother. More likely, what was uppermost in her mind was that marriage would cost her her autonomy, her treasured freedom to make her own decisions that had been hers for so many

years. So perhaps it should not have been surprising that she never remarried

As a rule, however, I had traveled my road and Mother hers, and the two did not often intersect. Yet Ben and I respected and loved our mother for her self-denial, for the sacrifices she had made and was every day making on our behalf. We seldom argued with her, or talked back. Mother could convey her attitude by soft words of regret or, without any words at all, simply by a certain mournful look in her eyes. We saw that look often.

My true home in those years, the one that remains in my memory as the place that felt like “home,” was my grandparents’ apartment, four blocks away at 1781 Riverside Drive. That building, six stories of mustard-colored brick, was of 1920’s vintage, one of a series of similar-looking apartment houses which lined the northern end of Riverside Drive, extending from the Henry Hudson Parkway in a gentle curve eastward to the intersection of the Drive with Broadway and Dyckman Street. As the first building in that row, No. 1781 was the best situated because of its unobstructed view across the Hudson River to the New Jersey Palisades beyond.

When my grandparents first moved into the building in October 1937, a doorman in a blue greatcoat with gold braid on his sleeves stood under the green canvas awning at the building entrance and opened the front door, with its elaborately-carved wrought iron grill, for tenants and their guests. Once inside, one walked the full length of the lobby on terrazzo inlay floors, past rococo-style consoles, gilt mirrors and paintings, to the single elevator, with its mahogany-paneled cab. In later years, there was no doorman and no awning, but even when the building fell on harder times, remnants of its past elegance remained. One could still make out dimly in the transom over the front door the gilt-painted name of the building, the “Julia Arms.” Coincidentally, that was Grandmother’s middle name and was later to be the name of our oldest child. Eventually, only the terrazzo floors and stained-glass lobby windows remained as testimony to the building’s former grandeur.

Just to enter that building, whether as a young boy or, years later, as an adult, promised stability, the warmth of an all-embracing *gemütlichkeit*, and the pleasures of the bourgeois life. Sometimes I took the elevator to Grandmother’s fifth floor apartment, at other

times I bounded up the steep stairs. Always, the door to the apartment was ajar in anticipation of my arrival, Grandmother standing in the doorway, a welcoming smile on her face.

Within those walls I learned who I was, where I had come from, and what I should strive to be. My grandmother imparted that to me by passing on to me the family myths. The well-known psychiatrist and therapist, Rollo May, defines that word well for our purposes:

*I do not use the term myth in the common present-day deteriorated meaning of 'falsehood.' This is an error that could be committed only by a society that has become so inebriated with adding up empirical facts that it seals off the deeper meaning of human history. I use myth as meaning, rather, a dramatic presentation of the moral wisdom of the race. The myth uses the totality of the senses rather than just the intellect.*<sup>101</sup>

As May defined "myth" as the "moral wisdom of the race," so Grandmother was transmitting to me the moral wisdom of the family, through the narration of events that had taken place years earlier. It would often happen this way: I would ask Grandmother to explain the origin of one of the many exotic paintings and objects in the apartment. She, responding, would launch into one of those many family myths that she was eager to pass on to me. She may have done so to root me in the family tradition, for, as Rollo May wrote:

*The person without a myth is a person without a home, and one would indeed clutch for other cultures to find some place at some time a 'mythic womb.' To be a member of a community is to share its myths. . . The outsider, the foreigner, the stranger is the one who does not share our myths, the one who steers by different stars, worships different gods.*<sup>102</sup>

Is it not, after all, the grandparent's role to tell those stories, to ensure that those who follow share in the family's core myths? A contemporary writer agrees:

*I've come to recognize that one of the functions of a grandparent or family elder is to pass on the family stories in an effort to sustain a sense of family history across time and the many separations that occur. This is an important function.*<sup>103</sup>

Specifically, it was Grandmother's role to pass on to her grandchildren the family's heritage, its central myth, as Rollo May

uses the term. She constantly reminded my brother and me that, on our father's side of the family, we were the descendants of extraordinary men and women: the Warburgs, ancestors of Grandmother's, a long line of bankers and financiers to German nobility; her own father, Louis Lewin, the renowned toxicologist, an expert in poisonous plants and a pioneer in warning of the occupational hazards of industrial chemicals; her husband, Curt Sachs, the respected musicologist; and our own father, his life tragically cut short. Calvin Trillin could have had our family in mind when he wrote:

*Upbringings have themes. The parents set the theme, explicitly or implicitly, and the children pick it up, sometimes accurately, and sometimes not so accurately. When you hear people talking about their childhoods, you can detect a theme. The theme may be "Our family has a distinguished heritage that you must live up to," or "We are suffering because your father deserted us," or "No matter what happens, we are fortunate to be together in this lovely corner of the earth," or "There are simply too many of you to make this thing work."*<sup>104</sup>

Just so, Grandmother dinned into Ben and me our family's myth: I, she was saying, value my family and its history. I honor those men and women. I want you to honor them, to value your heritage, and to be worthy of it. By telling you these stories, I am seeking to ensure that you do so, and that you, in turn, pass that tradition on to your children and grandchildren.

It was also Grandmother's role, and not Mother's, to train me in correct manners and behavior and to show me the right path. "Daniel, in our family we don't do that kind of thing," was an admonition I heard often from her. Growing up, I often strayed from the right path, but, as Grandmother had set me on that path, I knew when I was not upholding her standards.

On Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, I went to Grandmother's apartment after school, rather than to the one we lived in on Seaman Avenue. Those were the days on which Mother held down her second job, teaching Spanish and Spanish Literature as a professor at the Hunter College Evening Division. She would stay downtown after finishing her first job, coming home only at ten o'clock at night. In good weather, I would drop my books at Grandmother's house and go back out into the street, perhaps to play street games on Payson Avenue with other boys my age or

hang out at Stein's candy store on Dyckman Street. There we would count out our pennies for a chocolate egg cream, a lime or orange or cream soda or one of the ice cream specialties: a Popsicle, a Creamsicle, a MelloRoll (ice cream in a cylindrical paper roll, which you gradually peeled off to get to the ice cream within) or a Dixie Cup filled with chocolate and vanilla ice cream, brown on one side, white on the other. Many kids saved and collected Dixie Cup lids because the undersides of the lids had photos of leading Hollywood actors and actresses of the day. Or, if we were not in an ice cream mood, we might pay a nickel for a Baby Ruth candy bar or a Tootsie Roll, a roll of Necco wafers, or a penny for a licorice stick.

Then I would trudge back to 1781 Riverside Drive to do my homework. I did not rebel against homework as some children do. I readily accepted the need to do it; indeed, in English, history and geography, I welcomed it. Doing what comes easily is never arduous, never a duty undertaken reluctantly. While some boys my age looked forward to the afterschool hours as the time for sports and kid games, I was the studious boy who every day launched happily into his homework assignments. Looking now through my grandfather's neat homework books, done when he was between the ages of 10 and 14, and those of my father, it occurs to me that perhaps I had a genetic predisposition to learn, to soak up information.

Or was it that a nurturing environment stimulated the neural wiring that was already in place? When I came to Grandmother's house, finished with the day's activities, she had a place cleared for me at the large round ash-wood dining table. This was the table that Grandmother and her daughter Gabie had bought just before leaving Berlin in 1937 and had had shipped to New York. Were they mistrustful of the quality of American furniture or simply foresighted, not wanting to take the time on their arrival in New York to buy the dining set when there were so many other matters to be dealt with? In this they were not alone:

*Besides bringing along their own furniture and memorabilia, many [German-Jewish immigrants] bought new furniture for the trip, or acquired saleable items which could be resold in the new country.*<sup>105</sup>

Now that same round dining table, its surface cleared of other clutter, was ready for the business at hand, my homework. For that daily routine, structure and discipline prevailed. Nothing was done

by halves. Grandmother made sure that my body was square to the table, my feet flat on the floor directly in front of me. There could be no slovenly lounging, no slouching with an elbow in the table, hand to jaw. So her mother had prepared her to do her homework; so she had shown her own children how to get ready; and now, in the third generation, she was instructing me.

In those time-honored ways, I not only prepared myself physically but mentally as well, with all distracting influences banished from my mind. To do homework and at the same time be diverted by radio, or, in today's terms, by a CD player, an iPod or television, would have been unthinkable. Positioned in front of me at the table were my composition book and blank sheets of paper, lined or unlined, depending on whether my homework was in arithmetic or English or social studies. On my right, parallel to the workbook, were two well-sharpened pencils, Eberhard Faber No. 2. Aligned across the top of the workbook was a twelve-inch ruler, on my left, a compass and protractor, if they were needed. *A chaque sa place, et chacun a sa place.* Then, in absolute silence and concentration, I worked on my assignments. When I was finished, I gave my work to Grandmother for her careful scrutiny.

Occasionally, there was an arithmetic problem that I could not solve, perhaps a five-digit number divided by a four-digit number, or a four-digit number multiplied by another four-digit number. Grandmother would suggest that I put it away for Grandfather, the solver of last resort. When he returned that evening from his work at the New York Public Library, he would take up the problem and immediately arrive at the right answer, making it look easy, but his paperwork was useless to me. The steps he had been taught in Berlin as a schoolboy in 1891 to arrive at the right answer were not the ones that the New York City public schools were teaching; I would get no credit for the right answer if I did it his way. My aunt Gabie, Grandfather's daughter and thus of a generation earlier than mine, once told me that, as a girl, she had had the same problem when, in the 1920's, he had tried to help her with her schoolwork.

When I had a special project for school, Grandmother took pleasure in helping me with it. If it were a papier-mâché relief map or a model, she would prepare the material and join me at the table, with suggestions for improvements as I went about my work.

When I had finished my homework, I might listen to the afternoon radio serials for an hour. Then it would be dinnertime.

But first came the pre-dinner ritual, Grandfather's hand-washing. In today's terms, he was obsessive on that subject. Sometimes I stood in the bathroom doorway while he washed his hands at the lavatory just inside the door. I marveled at his hands, white, hairless, almost feminine, and his beautifully manicured nails. With Grandfather, the simple act of washing the hands became an almost Zen-like ceremony. After he had finished and toweled his hands carefully, he would supervise me while I washed my hands.

Finally, our hands scrubbed clean, we entered the dining room for dinner. In my grandparents' time, dinners were still a major family event, to be anticipated and enjoyed as a time for the entire family to come together and share the day's experiences or exchange views on the goings-on in the family, in the neighborhood, in the world.

Grandmother served lunch and tea to Grandfather in his room, but we always came together for dinner. My grandparents considered conversation an art, to be mastered and savored as the food was. They welcomed you as a guest for your ability as a raconteur, a conversationalist, and you could be stricken from a guest list if you were known to be a windy bore. Today, it's a different story, as the contemporary writer Larry McMurtry points out:

*The force that blows families apart has reached gale force in our time. One can see this in the demise of the family dinner table. Dinner was a virtually inviolable ritual. The shared meal was the touchstone of good manners.*<sup>106</sup>

I am glad that my grandparents did not live to see the day when the evening meal consists of a Swanson frozen-food dinner in a tray, microwaved, with each member of the family eating his or hers without a word spoken between them, or even while each of them watches his own television program in a separate room.

My chair at dinnertime was the same one I had occupied in doing my homework. Grandfather sat to my right, against the wall, and, on his right, across from me, Grandmother, with Ben to my left. Once we were seated, Grandfather would majestically intone "*Mahlzeit*," a secular contraction of "*gesegneter Mahlzeit*" (approximately "Bless this mealtime"). You couldn't start eating until he had pronounced that abbreviated benediction. Then, with purposeful bird-like steps, like a tern scampering ahead of a

breaking wave, Grandmother would emerge from the kitchen, bringing in the food in big white porcelain serving dishes.

Over the years, Grandmother prepared an astonishing quantity of excellent food in that kitchen, despite the obstacles that the kitchen and its appliances presented. Just inside the door from the dining room was the 1940's-vintage free-standing gas range. Next to it were the back door to the apartment, the sink and the tiny Frigidaire icebox, as we called it. Across from the icebox was the dumbwaiter. In earlier years it had been used to send trash and garbage down to the basement for disposal, but it attracted so many cockroaches that, early on, it was locked and painted shut, never to be used again. Next to the dumbwaiter were the double windows from which Grandmother often called Ben and me in from our play to do our homework or eat dinner. In front of the windows was the small kitchen table, used more for food preparation than for eating, and next to the table the built-in cabinets, top and bottom, with a shelf in between on which rested the large white-enamel breadbox brought over from Berlin.

Grandmother cooked and served good solid food, the kind she had prepared throughout her married life. The main course might be *Wiener schnitzel*, *sauerbraten*, *falscher haase* or *Königsberger klopse*. *Wiener schnitzel* is veal steak, soaked in egg and breaded, then sautéed. *Sauerbraten* is pot roast covered with thick brown gravy, *falscher haase* is meat loaf, baked in a rectangular loaf pan, with a hard-cooked egg buried inside, and *Königsberger klopse* are little meatballs, dropped into boiling water to cook and then lightly braised. *Treyfe* (unclean) foods such as pork, ham, bacon and shellfish, were never served.

Accompanying the meat was a selection of starches and vegetables: potatoes, boiled or mashed, noodles, red cabbage, green peas and cauliflower. The only seasonings were salt, pepper and dill, with pats of butter over the vegetables. Grandmother did not use garlic in her cooking. Until I left for college I had never tasted it. German Jews, I later learned, did not eat garlic; it was considered foreign and low-class. Specifically, they thought it to be a favorite food among Eastern European Jews, and they avoided it as unsuited to their efforts to "blend in" with their German neighbors.

*I asked my father if all Jews were rich. My father told me that there also lots of poor Jews, especially in Eastern Europe.*

"And in Germany, too?" I asked.

"Here, too," said my father, "but not as many as in the East."

"Our teacher told us recently," I said, "that all Jews eat garlic."

"We don't eat garlic," said my father.

"Why?" I asked.

"Because it gives me heartburn," said my father.

"And the other Jews?" I asked.

"In the East," said my father, "they eat a lot of garlic. But the *goyim* there, they eat it, too."

"What are *goyim*?" I asked.

"Those are the non-Jews," said my father.<sup>107</sup>

Only later in my adult life, no longer bound by the cultural associations and taboos of an earlier generation, did I develop a fondness for garlic. If it was an important element in French *haute cuisine*, I reasoned, then I was free to enjoy it as well.

At the dinner table, Grandmother and I drank milk or, in the summer, a refreshing glass of ice-cold *himbeersaft* (raspberry syrup in water). Coca-Cola and other carbonated soft drinks were unknown in our house. A large gallon jug of burgundy, Gallo or Christian Brothers, along with a crystal wine goblet, stood at Grandfather's place at the table. Grandfather drank in moderation; at dinner, two glasses of wine were his limit. Dessert might be rice pudding, *rote Grütze* (junket) or *butter Keks* (cookies).

The dinnertable conversation between my grandparents was in German, I following. When they spoke to me, it was also in German; I usually answered in English. This seemed to be an arrangement that suited all of us. My grandparents did not force me to reply to them in German, and it would never have entered my mind to ask them to speak English to me at the dinner table, although they spoke it on all other occasions.

Often, at dinnertime, Grandmother would admonish me sharply about my table manners: don't "cook" on your plate, clean your plate, put your knife across the top of the plate when you're finished, wipe your mouth before drinking, keep your elbows off the table, don't talk with your mouth full, chew your food carefully before swallowing it. Sometimes, sullenly, I would make some less-than-respectful retort. Then Grandfather would join in, snapping at me. I would do as I was told, and the three of us would lapse into a

tense silence, broken only by the clatter of silverware against our plates.

At other times, after Grandfather had finished talking about the events of his day, my grandparents would turn to me and ask me about my day at school. One evening, I mentioned a classmate of mine by name. Grandfather slapped his hand, palm down, on the edge of the table, and burst out, "There is no such name!" At that young age, I thought to myself, "What does he mean, there is no such name? My classmate has that name, therefore that name exists." But Grandfather was right, as he usually was.

Grandfather was an avid onomatologist, a student of names and their origins. He knew that, when German Jews were required to adopt last names, they took the name of their hometown, such as Oppenheimer or Freiburger, or their occupation, Schneider, Fleischer, or Schreiber, or a physical quality or character trait, Klein or Lange, Fröhlich or Ehrlich, or of an animal or bird, Hecht or Fink. If it were not German, the name might have a Biblical origin, Cohen or Levy, or it might be the Yiddish word for an occupation, such as Schechter or Eisner, or an acronym comprised of the first letters of Hebrew words, Katz or Siegel.

Names were more than a random collection of letters or sounds; they had historical significance. Grandfather didn't recognize my classmate's name as a "real" name, measured by those standards. It might have been given to the boy's father or grandfather at Ellis Island by the immigration agent, the Anglicized version of another name that sounded too exotic, too foreign, too hard to pronounce. Perhaps on their arrival in America the family had taken the new name for itself, so as not to appear so obviously Jewish or "foreign." This was not a transformation unique to Jews arriving in America. They had done the same in Europe to assimilate more readily into non-Jewish society. Migrating westward from Poland to Prussia, my great-great-grandfather Hirsch Lewin had changed the family name from Apfelboim (in Yiddish, apple tree) to Lewin, still a Jewish name but one less obviously Eastern European.<sup>108</sup>

Ah, if that round dining table in my grandparents' dining room could speak! I did my homework and took my evening meals there, yes, but it was much more than a piece of furniture at which one ate and studied. As Ben and I were growing up, it was a focal point of family *simchas* (joyful occasions) and sorrows, a place for the liveliest conversation and utter stillness. How often had we gathered as a

family around that table, at Chanukah time, at Pesach (Passover) Seders and for important birthdays. In 1943, when my aunt Gabrielle married Maurice Koenigsberg, the bride and groom, the rabbi and family members crowded into Grandmother's bedroom for the ceremony, then adjourned to the dining room for a wedding feast at that table. In 1961, when my uncle Ernest died at 42, I was with Grandmother and Judith when they returned from the funeral. As evening shadows lengthened, we sat in the gloom around that same table, Grandmother, Judith and I, the three of us in utter silence, each of us lost in our own thoughts. I could well imagine what was in the two women's minds. How many mothers have lost both sons to illness, how many sisters have lost their two brothers, both before their time?

In earlier, happier, years, my grandparents frequently had dinner guests at that table: Wanda Landowska, the famous harpsichordist, sitting erect at the table as she would at her keyboard, thin-faced with an aquiline nose, sharp black eyes and black hair pulled tightly back in a bun; the tall and cadaverous-looking Otto Kinkeldey, a colleague of Grandfather's and first president of the American Musicological Society; and Gustave Reese, grandfather's superior at New York University. On occasions such as these, Grandmother used the elegant Bernardaud Limoges china and served the more expensive cuts of meat such as roast lamb or veal. As a vegetable she might bring out steamed white asparagus on a platter. I never appreciated how special white asparagus are, until I started doing the grocery shopping and paying for food from my own pocket!

When guests were present, I would sit at the table quietly unless spoken to, feeling privileged just to be there, taking in the conversation as a spectator at a tennis match moves his head this way and that to keep track of the ball.

Grandfather was a polymath, who could speak learnedly and wisely not only in his own field but in many others. Schooled at the *Französisches Gymnasium*, along with many others of the "best and the brightest" in Wilhelmine Germany, he had gone on to get his undergraduate and doctoral degrees at the University of Berlin. As a professor who had spent his lifetime in front of university students, expressing his opinions on a wide variety of subjects, Grandfather brought his strong opinions home with him and did not hesitate to express them at the dinner table. Like other German-Jewish immigrant intellectuals, he held a low opinion of American popular

culture and made no effort to hide it. These men, mostly academics steeped in the culture of the German Enlightenment, had been educated to believe that the pre-Hitler German civilization was the worthy contemporary inheritor of classical Greek culture.<sup>109</sup> While still in Germany, these refugee intellectuals had derided American culture as producing little or nothing of value. They were suspicious of a system that could give political power to the rabble, the “great unwashed.” Theodor Adorno, the renowned philosopher and observer of contemporary culture, himself a German émigré, had referred to Americans as “intellectual barbarians.”<sup>110</sup>

In dinnertable conversation, Grandfather frequently made disparaging comments on the contemporary American scene. Based on his experience in teaching American undergraduates and postgraduates, he was especially critical of the public education system here. He particularly objected to America’s localized system where, at least at that time, the curriculum and standards of learning varied from one school district to the next instead of being established uniformly throughout the nation as in the European countries. He saw the European system as preferable because it was more likely to raise American students to the high cultural levels that he had encountered among university students in Germany.

Hearing this kind of harangue at the dinnertable, I would often grant his point, but I would say to myself, “Wait a minute, this country provided you with a haven. Don’t be so free to criticize it; it’s not becoming.” But those thoughts always remained unexpressed.

No matter how critical Grandfather could be of American popular culture,<sup>111</sup> there was, underneath, a deep gratitude to this country for having provided us with a safe haven. Never did I hear from my grandparents the sentiment that this was only a way station on the road to somewhere else. Not for them the notion that, as Jews, we had to keep our bags packed, so to speak, ready to leave on a moment’s notice, for Palestine or elsewhere.<sup>112</sup> For them and for their children, this was home and would remain so, their final resting place. They would have agreed with the elderly widow of the famed Austrian playwright, Arthur Schnitzler, who consoled younger refugees by saying, “Yes, we have lost a homeland but we have gained a world.”<sup>113</sup> It can safely be said of my grandfather that, while he had already made his reputation when he arrived in America, he would not have gained the worldwide exposure as a

writer and lecturer that he achieved here had he remained in Germany (assuming that Hitler had not come to power). Ironically, because of his pre-eminent position here in America, Grandfather was in greater demand in Germany and elsewhere after the war than he likely would have been had he not emigrated to America.<sup>114</sup>

Years later, Mother made the same point in a speech to her nephew, Michael Feiler, at his Bar Mitzvah on June 8, 1963:

*Despite the comparative comfort in which they had lived in Germany before Hitler came to power, hardly anyone among your relatives and friends ever murmured against the hardships accompanying their wanderings through different foreign lands before they were able to settle in America. We did not pine for the flesh and the fish we were used to eating in our Egypt, nor for the "cucumbers and the melons, the leeks and the onions and the garlic." Our gratitude for having been spared silenced our complaints. Besides, each family was on its own in the struggle for survival in the new land. We had no Moses as our leader, whom we could hold responsible for our troubles.*

They were grateful that they had survived, yes, but my grandparents were never to be Americans through and through. Middle-aged when they arrived here, they were imbued with the culture they had absorbed from infancy in Germany and could not readily discard it. While they despised the Nazi leadership and the ordinary German who had all too eagerly followed Hitler on his murderous path, a lifetime of *Kultur* could not be shed easily, nor would they have wanted to do so. One writer summed it up this way:

*They came to this country as adults, with European sensibilities . . . It would seem that what America gave them, as far as their further intellectual and artistic development was concerned, was minimal.*<sup>115</sup>

In our years, Ben's and mine, as grandsons and as guests at the grandparents' table, the routine scarcely ever varied. Night after night, Grandmother cleared the table and headed for the kitchen to wash the dishes. In all the years that I observed my grandparents in that apartment, Grandfather never helped to clear dishes from the table; indeed, I never saw Grandfather in the kitchen. That was strictly Grandmother's domain. In those days before automatic dishwashers, she washed and scoured each dish, then rinsed it and stacked it in the dish rack to dry, or dried it with a hand towel and put it away for the next day. That was Grandmother's job and she

did it, without complaint, for most of the fifty years of their marriage, and for more years after Grandfather's death.

As Grandmother headed to the kitchen to clean the dishes and put them away, Grandfather retired to his room, Ben and I following. Grandfather's room was at the end of the long corridor leading from the front door. The architect who designed the building had probably intended that it be used as the living room. One entered it through double French doors, their panes covered for privacy by tightly-shirred curtains.

Inside the room, directly to the right of the double doors and next to the narrow daybed, was a mahogany baby grand piano. As a young man, Grandfather had composed music and had even played the piano at public performances. In 1903, when Grandfather was 22, a Berlin concert audience heard thirteen songs that he had composed for voice and piano. A reviewer present at the concert wrote of Grandfather that "his is an unusually strong talent" and that "his further compositions are awaited with interest." It appears, however, that Grandfather's attention soon turned from musical composition to the study of music history.

In later life he no longer played the piano, even for pleasure. Only once, at a family gathering, did we prevail on him to play for us. He probably used the piano only to test some hypothesis on rhythm or dynamics that he was intending to include in the book he was writing at the time. Nor was there, either in his bedroom or elsewhere in the house, a gramophone or record player or the phonograph records to be played on them. Sometimes, Grandfather would hum a piece of music to himself and wave his forearms as if he were conducting music that only he could "hear," but recorded music played no role in my grandparents' apartment. It had been so much a part of his professional life, first in Berlin, then in Paris and now in New York, that it was not surprising that he had no need for it at home. Nor, despite the central role that music played in his life, did Grandfather try to instill a love of music in his grandchildren. Had he wished to do so, he could have easily sat down with us at the baby grand in his room and taught us how to play the piano or the rudiments of composition, but he chose to do neither, and it never entered our minds to ask.

At the far end of Grandfather's room were the two windows, looking out onto the Henry Hudson Parkway, in the middle distance the Hudson River, and the New Jersey Palisades on the far

shore. Grandfather's carved oak ebony-stained desk and his desk chair stood in front of those windows. Made especially for him, the desk was the one he had used in his study in the family home on Lichtensteinallée in Berlin. On the pedestals on each side of the knee-hole were doors that swung out to reveal sliding shelves inside. The doors themselves bore intricate carvings in *alto rilievo*, their motifs reflecting his major interests: an easel and brushes on one pedestal door, musical instruments on the other.

Centered on the desk was Grandfather's Olympia portable typewriter, gray with green keys. From that small typewriter, and, of course, from the brain of the man whose fingers tapped its keys, there poured forth an astonishing output of books, articles and correspondence in the 22 years in which Grandfather lived on Riverside Drive. In neat piles atop the desk and on the piano as well were stacked the makings of the book he was writing: typewritten sheets covered with editorial markings, galley proofs or page proofs. That desk is in my house now, mute and unused except as a platform for an encyclopedia and an atlas. Looking at it, thus unused, I think back with admiration and mild remorse on the endlessly creative activity that took place there, activity which ceased only shortly before Grandfather's death.

On the left wall of his room, opposite the bed, was the bookcase, its shelves lined with books: my Grandfather's, in their many languages, my great-grandfather Louis Lewin's, and other books which my grandparents had collected or inherited. Grandfather's club chair was directly in front of the bookcase; at its side the coffee table now in our living room. This was the room to which he and I, and brother Ben, retired after dinner.

Evenings began with the ritual lighting of Grandfather's Cuesta Rey cigar. He would sit back in his club chair, a grandson on each arm of the chair. Ben, poised at Grandfather's left, readied the brass cigar cutter with its long cloisonné-enameled handle. On a signal from Grandfather, he snipped off the end of the cigar. I, sitting on the other arm, held the lit match in front of the cigar while he inhaled in short puffs to get the cigar going. With the cigar lit, he would lean back, contentedly taking a deep breath, his eyes contemplating the glow at the end of the cigar. Now he was ready for the evening's pastimes, and so were we.

A favorite diversion of his was the *New York Times* crossword puzzle. As a boy, I marveled that a man whose native language was

German had such extraordinary command of the English language. The conventional crossword puzzle presented no challenge to him. He preferred the puns-and-anagrams or the diagramless puzzle, where the beginnings and ends of words are not marked by black squares and the word length is limited only by the number of empty squares.

When Grandfather was not working on a word puzzle, he might be putting together a jigsaw puzzle, employing the same logical strengths that served him well with the crossword puzzle. I helped him on one such particularly difficult puzzle that was beautiful when completed: a painting depicting the death of Lord Nelson at Trafalgar, the fleet admiral dying on the deck of H.M.S. *Victory* in the arms of his second-in-command, Captain Scott, in the background the dead and wounded, sails ripped and shot through, splintered masts and spars. Unforgettable, even after 70 years!

Still a third form of amusement was Chinese checkers, not with marbles in holes, but with beautifully carved wooden pieces on an ornate box, the squares marked by inlaid wood. As Grandfather's opponent, I would carefully develop my pieces, readying them for the big jump from my end of the board to his, unaware that he had been doing the same, only more quickly. Before I knew what had hit me, he was using the "bridge" he had created, moving the men in the rear into my territory with a long string of jumps from one end of the board to the other. It amazed me that Grandfather took such pleasure in his triumph over his grandson, then 9 or 10 years old. Letting me win was inconceivable; I never did.

In later years, I did not fail when visiting New York to pay my respects at Apartment 5-J on Riverside Drive. After one such visit, while on leave from the Army over the 1958 Christmas holidays, Grandfather, then 77, saw me to the door. As I stood waiting for the elevator, he was still standing in the half-open door. He seemed to be drinking in the sight of me, trying to fix me in his mind, on his face an expression of the most intense love and affection. It must have been in his mind that this might be his last sight of me, and mine of him. Indeed it was: two months later, while I was in Washington, having just begun law school, he entered Mount Sinai Hospital for kidney surgery. The surgery was not successful; he lapsed into a coma and died on February 5, 1959.

Grandmother, now a widow, remained in that apartment until her death in June 1985. I visited her whenever I was in New York,

first by myself, then with my wife, Ruthie, and, still later, with our children. She always had a repast waiting for me there. Sometimes it was a *teenwurst* (beef sausage) or *rauchfleisch* (smoked beef) sandwich on good Jewish rye bread, with a cup of Earl Grey tea alongside it. Sometimes she served her own homebaked butter cookies, or, as she grew older and too frail to do her own baking, a tarte from Stern's bakery on Dyckman Street, or English cookies from a tin. The meal was always topped off with the confection that she knew I enjoyed, Haagsche Hopjes, coffee bonbons from Holland.

In September 1979, our daughter Julia, Grandmother's oldest great-grandchild, turned thirteen and had her Bat Mitzvah. Grandmother was too old and frail to make the trip to Connecticut to be present at the synagogue. So, a few weeks later, we drove to New York so that Julia could read her *Haftarah*<sup>116</sup> portion to Grandmother. As Julia sat at Grandfather's desk, chanting the Hebrew aloud, Grandmother, bent with age, stood behind her, looking attentively over Julia's shoulder.

Grandmother remained alert to the last days of her life, never wavering in her insistence on politesse. When she was in her late 80's and I in my 40's, I visited her to help her in some legal matters. With Grandmother seated at what had been Grandfather's desk and I at her side, I brought my attaché case to my lap, opened the lid and rummaged among the papers inside to find a certain document. I was not at that moment the suave man of the world that she expected me to be, so she said sharply, "Daniel, take that thing down from your lap." Thinking to myself, "*Plus ça change . . .*," I obediently snapped the case shut and set it back at my feet.

On receiving the news of Grandmother's death on June 4, 1985, Ruthie and I drove hurriedly to New York. She had died that morning in her wheelchair. As she was being wheeled from her bedroom to the dining room for breakfast, her chin had simply slumped onto her chest and she was gone. Now, entering her bedroom, I saw Grandmother as my aunt Judith had dressed her, laid out on her bed in her pink satin quilted robe, her feet sheathed in dainty embroidered slippers, her hands at her sides. When the funeral director's staff arrived, we stood aside respectfully while they placed Grandmother in a body bag, strapped the bag to a gurney, and took her out of Apartment 5-J for the last time.

Grandmother died as she had lived, in humility and diffidence. At her request, there was no service at the funeral parlor, no rabbi,

no eulogies, no cortege. My aunts Gabie and Judith, my mother and brother and I, along with Grandmother's Guyanese caregivers, gathered at the gravesite at Cedar Park cemetery. I led the short interment service, reciting *El Moleh Rachamim*, the Jewish prayer for the dead. We embraced each other silently and left through those same gates that Ben and I had passed through so many times, first, as boys, to visit Father's grave, then to visit Grandfather's grave and now Grandmother's. Cedar Park was to receive still two other family members in death: Aunt Judith, who died in 1990 and lies next to Grandmother, and then, the following year, Mother. Her grave is not far from theirs, just downhill from Grandfather's.

After Judith died, it was left to Ben and me to close up the apartment. On our final visit, three months after Judith's death, the furniture was gone, the apartment stripped bare to the wood floors and the plaster walls. The late afternoon sun came flooding through the windows of Grandfather's room. It would be a beautiful apartment for the next tenant.

As Ben and I walked through the apartment, making a last-minute check on each room and all the closets, I saw in my mind's eye the apartment as it had been, fully furnished, the bookcases against the wall in Grandfather's room, his ebony-black desk strewn with manuscripts, and his favorite club chair; in Grandmother's bedroom the *damenchiffonniere* (ladies' dresser), secretary and modest single bed; the round table, the pantry cabinet and the telephone table in the dining room. Each piece of furniture evoked its special association with Chanukahs and Seders long past, with festive dinners and *gemütliche* evenings, with weddings, bar mitzvahs and yes, with death, with those who had lived in the apartment and those who had passed through. Finally, standing at the front door, my hand on the knob, I looked back down the corridor and, bemused, noticed the indentations in the oak corridor floor. Grandfather had made them forty years earlier by pounding a broom handle up and down on the floor to protest the noise that the downstairs neighbor was making. I was still smiling inwardly as I closed the door on Apartment 5-J and on what had been for fifty-three years a central part of my life.

## THE WAR YEARS

In September 1943, I came as a nine-year-old to live with my grandparents in their apartment on Riverside Drive, remaining there until June of the following year. My brother, in that same year, was placed with Mother's good friend, Meira Pimsleur, who lived at 114th Street and Amsterdam Avenue, across from Columbia University. In later years, we wondered why we had been farmed out, so to speak, for that one school year. What was Mother going through during that period that was so difficult, so traumatic, that she could not face the task of caring for us? Perhaps, although this is mere surmise, all the stresses of that time came together to the point where she could no longer care for us and still carry on in her job. Then again, in what way had matters improved for her at the end of that year, enabling her to take care of her boys again, or had her life truly improved? Despite our curiosity, we did not ask her these questions, wanting to spare her the pain of having to recall what spurred her to take these difficult actions.

That year at my grandparents' apartment, I slept in what had been my Aunt Judith's bedroom before she moved to her own quarters. During that time, I came down with a severe case of bronchitis and stayed home from school for three weeks. Aside from the discomfort of a high fever and the constant coughing and wheezing, those were wonderful weeks. I drank copious amounts of tea and sipped endless bowls of chicken soup. Best of all, Grandmother spent many hours at my bedside, telling me, from memory, the story of Odysseus, beginning with his departure from Troy and ending with his return to Ithaca, his homeland. There his faithful wife Penelope, awaiting her husband's return, had been fending off her suitors' advances by endlessly spinning and undoing

the tunic she was knitting for her husband. I was particularly impressed as a 9-year-old boy with Odysseus's narrow escape from the Cyclops, the one-eyed giants, and with his stouthearted resistance to the temptations of Circe the Siren.

When she had finished telling me the story of the Odyssey, Grandmother began telling me from memory the story of the Ring of the Nibelungen, the ancient Teutonic epic. After these many years, I remember only the climax: having slain Fafnir, the dragon, Siegfried immerses himself in its blood, making himself invincible, but a leaf from a linden tree falls on his back, leaving him unprotected on that spot. Later, as Siegfried leans over a rushing brook to drink from its clear waters, the arch-villain, Hagen, plunges his javelin directly into that spot and kills him. Just as Achilles had his vulnerable heel, so Siegfried had that one vulnerable spot as well. We learn from these legends that even the gods and the near-gods have their frailties, albeit only one, the symbolic weakness that makes them less-than-perfect and more human.

In telling me these stories from memory, Grandmother was continuing in the tradition of the ancient storytellers—the bards, minnesingers and troubadours—the tradition now largely fallen into disuse among generations more accustomed to entertainment in half-hour segments on television, or in two-hour segments on film. Homer was one such ancient storyteller. His *Iliad* and *Odyssey* had passed from his lips to others' ears, and then from lip to ear for more than a thousand years before they were first put into writing. In earlier generations, when children and adults had more time for each other, storytelling was an art possessed by many grown-ups. They told their children the stories they had learned from their parents and grandparents. It was each generation's way of forging a link between the generations, to inculcate life's lessons and to glorify the heroes of bygone days. Grandmother had that art in abundance, using it to convey stories not only of the great heroes and heroines of the Homeric and Teutonic sagas, but of the figures in her own life, no less heroic in her own eyes: her parents and my father. I hung on every word, and absorbed the lessons she sought to convey. Only years later did I fully understand how these myths must have resonated to Grandmother. Had we not been uprooted, as Odysseus was, from our comfortable existence in a far-away

land, to endure countless hardships, overcome innumerable hurdles, on the way to our newfound freedom?

That year at Grandmother's, I also became an avid reader of the New York *Times*. The New York mass-circulation newspapers played up the crime stories of the day: the trial of two conniving no-counts for the robbery and grisly murder of a Park Avenue matron; the trial of Count Alfred de Marigny for the murder of his father-in-law, Sir Harry Oakes; and the execution at New York's Sing Sing prison on March 4, 1944 of Louis (Lepke) Buchalter of Murder, Inc. I was drawn as well to what were then daily features of the *Times*: the shipping news, announcing the departures and arrivals of ocean liners, and the fire reports. Just as my grandson Jonah, at 5, was fascinated with his "Rescue Heroes," figures of emergency medical technicians, firefighters and the like, I was morbidly fascinated in reading the fire reports, especially those that bore, next to the address, the letters "TL," signifying that the property was now a total loss.

Young as I was, my primary interest in reading the *Times* were the daily reports from the battlefields around the world. I was seven years old on December 8, 1941, when the New York *Daily News* headlined in huge three-inch letters, "JAPS BOMB HAWAII . . . DECLARE WAR ON U.S. AND BRITAIN." Every day for the next four-and-a-half years, I followed the war news avidly. The winter and spring of 1942 marked the low point of the war for America and its allies. In the newspapers, we read every day how the gallant American soldiers were forced to retreat from Bataan to the island fortress of Corregidor, and how, after a long siege, the starving survivors were made to surrender. With General Jonathan Wainwright in the lead, the gaunt Americans and their Filipino allies emerged from the sally port at Corregidor and were brutally forced to march to imprisonment under heavy Japanese guard. Reading of Japanese soldiers bayoneting the faltering marchers, we came to hate the "Japs."

Despondent and outraged over the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, Americans took heart three days later from the heroism of Captain Colin P. Kelly, Jr. As boys, we read in our comic books that, on December 10, 1941, near the island of Luzon in the Philippines, Kelly piloted his dive-bomber as close as he could to the battleship *Haruna*, then released his bombs directly into the battleship's smokestacks, destroying the vessel, as he himself

perished. Reading about the event, I marveled that Captain Kelly's aim was so accurate that he could send those bombs directly down the Haruna's smokestacks while maneuvering the plane through blistering fire from the enemy's guns. Only years after the war did we learn that Captain Kelly was flying a B-17 bomber, not a dive-bomber, that the ship he attacked was not the battleship Haruna but a cruiser, that the bombs did not go down the ship's smokestacks and that his plane was shot down on its way back to the base, not by surface fire but by Japanese Zero fighters. Captain Kelly did, however, sacrifice his own life so that his surviving crew members could parachute from the plane safely. The discrepancy between the facts and the legend didn't matter then, and still doesn't, the legend becoming, as it often does, more important than the reality.

Instead of trading and flipping cards of baseball stars as we had before, now we boys on the street collected cards that featured, on the front, the pictures of Medal of Honor winners and told on the reverse the dramatic story of how they had won their medal. Those stories of wartime heroism were also dinned into us by the comic books which we read avidly. They showed the Japanese enemy, short, yellow-skinned, slant-eyed and buck-toothed, charging at the entrenched Americans, screaming "Banzai!" and then "Aieeeee!" as they were flung into the air by American shells and bullets. In the comic books, American soldiers were never killed in combat.

The movies, filmed under the watchful eye of the Office of War Information, also fed us a steady diet of wartime heroics. I remember them still: "Bataan"; "Purple Heart," the story of Doolittle's Raiders; "Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo"; "North Star," Lillian Hellman's film of the cruelties of the Germans in their occupation of Soviet Russia; "House on 92nd Street" (FBI breaks up nest of Nazi spies in New York City); "In Which We Serve," Noel Coward's paean to the men of the British surface fleet; "Sahara," with Humphrey Bogart, the victorious campaign of the Allies in North Africa; and "Destination Tokyo," the exploits of the American submarine, the USS *Copperfin*, which, avoiding Japanese anti-submarine devices, torpedoed enemy warships anchored in Tokyo Bay. More wartime films: "Lifeboat," with William Bendix and Tallulah Bankhead; "Watch on the Rhine," the story of a German teenager, sent to America as a refugee, who, at the crucial moment, comes downstairs wearing his Hitler Youth uniform with

the swastika armband; and, of course, “Casablanca.” Is there a more stirring moment in a century of film-making than when the freedom-fighter Victor Laszlo, played by Paul Henreid, defiantly leads the customers in Rick’s Bar in singing *La Marseillaise*, while Major Strasser and his Nazi cronies sit in sullen silence? Certainly, this 9-year-old was moved, and it moves me still, whenever I see that film.

The wartime films, especially those produced on the Warner Brothers assembly line, followed an unchanging formula. Act I: the young inexperienced officer takes charge of his unit, or his squadron, or his ship, at the naval base or Army post or airfield Stateside; they go through training together; you get to know the enlisted men, invariably named Kosinski, O’Brien, Romano and Goldstein, or their ethnic equivalents. In the final scene of Act I, the novice officer receives his orders, sending his unit into combat or his ship to sea. Act II, conflict and crisis: jealousy among the officers, or a grudge left over from civilian life, or an emergency appendectomy performed under primitive conditions, with a penknife. Act III, the core of the film: the climactic bombing raid or naval mission, underwater or on the surface; the invasion of Guadalcanal or Tarawa; heroism and death. Then Act IV, redemption: the hero, if he survives, returns home to receive a medal in front of his troops and falls into the arms of his beloved wife, the one whose photo he carried with him through the thick of the battle, or, if he falls, the commanding general presents his widow with his combat medals and folded American flag as the hero is interred at Arlington National Cemetery and warplanes fly in tight formation overhead. Yes, it was all done per formula, to get the cooperation of the U.S. Navy, the Army and the Marines, but it was very satisfying to this 9-year-old boy, emerging from the theatre into the late afternoon sun with his patriotic batteries recharged.

In those days before there was evening news on television, before there was, indeed, mass market television, Americans followed the progress of the war in the newsreels, a staple of the movie menu. On Saturday afternoons at the local movie palace, newsreels were shown after the cartoons and before the “coming attractions.” For those who preferred their newsreels uninterrupted by feature films, a small theatre in Grand Central Station, just east of the main concourse, showed newsreels continuously all day long, admission 25 cents. The newsreels gave an immediacy to the

wartime action that the newspapers and magazines lacked, but, again, they were edited to show only what the government wanted the American public to see.

The cover of the September 20, 1943 issue of *Life* magazine had a ground-level close-up photo of three American soldiers lying dead on the beach at Buna, in New Guinea, their faces in the mud of that distant shore. This brought the war home to civilians on the home front as no other photo had, because, until then, War Department censors had not permitted the publication of photos of American dead. To show photographs of Japanese or German corpses was acceptable but to show American dead had been forbidden. That photo made a powerful impression on me, leaving me to wonder who those young men were, where they were from, and whom they had left behind.

The war was raging in Europe and Asia, but the tide was beginning to turn in the Allies' favor. In November 1942, American soldiers had landed on the beach in French Morocco, meeting only light opposition from the Vichy French forces and sweeping eastward into Algeria. After overcoming bitter German resistance at the battle of the Kasserine Pass, the American forces gained control of Tunisia, while the British Eighth Army was pushing the Afrika Corps back across Egypt and Libya. At the time I thought to myself, "Now, this is the beginning of the end for the Axis!" On the Russian front, too, the German advance on Stalingrad had been turned back, at a huge cost in men and materiel, and the Germans were in retreat from Lake Ladoga to the Black Sea. Daily, on returning to my grandparents' apartment, I would pick up the *Times* to bring myself current on the news from the fronts. On page two of the first section, the *Times* carried the battle communiqués, with maps showing the front, marked by a wavy black line, and arrows showing the thrusts and counterthrusts of the opposing armies. I read those communiqués carefully every day, taking great satisfaction as each day's map showed the Germans pushed backward, farther to the west, on the Russian front. The Soviet communiqués always concluded by toting up the number of men killed and the enemy's materiel losses: "In yesterday's fighting in the Kursk salient our forces destroyed 334 enemy tanks, 475 rocket launchers and 73 trucks." I was skeptical even as a young boy that the Soviets had actually in the heat of battle counted each individual

piece of materiel destroyed and I was certain that the numbers had been grossly inflated.

Every morning, Grandmother brought the *New York Times* to Grandfather in his room, along with his breakfast tray. Before bringing him the paper, she had scanned it for stories that might upset him, and snipped them from the paper. Grandfather never saw, during the war, the articles which first hinted, then confirmed, that Jews and other civilians were being systematically annihilated by the hundreds of thousands in the German-occupied territories. If Grandfather ever asked why his daily paper was arriving with those holes in it, we don't know of it, nor do we know how Grandmother explained those gaps.

Everyone tried to cooperate in the war effort. When the sirens wailed as part of an air raid drill, we cooperated by pulling the window shades down, drawing the curtains and dimming the lights, until the sirens sounded the "all-clear." When I took my nightly bath, there was hardly enough water in the tub to get wet. I complained strenuously and asked Grandmother to let more water into the tub. Her answer: "The King of England is bathing in only four inches of water, to conserve water for the war effort. Why should you have more water than he does?" Well, I thought, certainly I can't expect to get better treatment than the King of England, and did not bring the subject up again.

Hating Hitler and Nazism and everything that it represented, German-Jewish refugees were keen to demonstrate their support for the war effort. After all, they owed their very lives to the generosity of the American government in allowing them into the country (even as it kept thousands of others out). Then, too, other Americans, seeing their German-sounding names and unable to distinguish between them and the few other Germans who quietly supported the other side, might have questioned the loyalty of those Jews. By June 1942, seven months after the start of the war, Mother was contributing \$1.00 a week through her postal savings account payroll deduction to the war effort. That was no small amount, when she was earning perhaps \$40 a week at the time. In that same month, she made a one-time donation through the Loyalty Committee of Victims of Nazi-Fascist Oppression toward the purchase of the "Loyalty Fighters Plane." One can imagine that many other ethnic and nationality groups were doing the same. My

pennies and those of schoolchildren around the country went to the purchase of rifles, mortars and other less expensive armaments.

In wartime, gasoline was strictly rationed. That didn't affect us, since we had no car. But the meats that in peacetime we take for granted—lamb, veal, chicken, steak—these were either not to be had at all or were also rationed. Each household had a ration book, with a limited number of stamps to be used each month. At the butcher shop, the housewife, if she bought a cut of meat that was on the ration list, had to part with precious red stamps when she paid for her purchases. Only a few meats were not subject to rationing, those that no one wanted but had to buy because they were the only ones offered for sale: brains, kidneys, chicken stomachs and hearts. In some countries, organ meats are considered delicacies, but I have still shied from eating calves' brains, thinking back on those wartime days.

The war was brought home to us most directly at our school, PS 52. Each child was given a “dog tag”: a Bakelite plastic disc, to be hung from a cord worn around the neck. On the disc was embossed the child's name and address. Air raids were a possibility, at least at the beginning of the war. German submarines were active in the waters off Long Island and New Jersey. American tankers had been torpedoed and sunk by U-boats within sight of the bathers on the Atlantic City beaches. The Japanese had launched explosive balloons, borne on eastward wind currents, which fell as far east as Michigan. A U-boat had landed German spies off the beach near Montauk in eastern Long Island. True, they had been quickly caught, tried and executed, but it shook our confidence that they could land safely so near New York City.

By slides projected on the classroom blackboard, we children were taught to identify the silhouettes of German Junkers, Fokkers and Messerschmidts, and Japanese Mitsubishi bombers and Zero fighters. When an air raid siren sounded, we were hustled out of the classroom and made to sit in the hallway, our backs to the wall, our heads tucked in between our knees, our ID tags dangling from our necks. All these precautions were exercises only: not one bomb was ever dropped by a hostile airplane onto American soil, in sharp contrast to what England suffered during the Blitz in 1940, when thousands of men, women and children were killed by German bombs. We treated these drills as play-acting. We never had to rush into real bomb shelters, as English schoolchildren did when

German bombers crossed the English Channel to drop their payloads on London. Sitting in the corridors, we did not hear the staccato bursts of anti-aircraft guns or the muffled explosions of German bombs, and we returned to undamaged classrooms when the all-clear sounded. At the end of the schoolday, we could be sure that our homes were still standing and that our loved ones were there to open the door for us. Neither was a certainty for an English child in those times.

Of course, the war was a reality for us, although we experienced it only at a distance. As we walked on the streets of the neighborhood, many ground-floor apartment windows displayed within, facing outward for passersby to see, the square silk banner with its golden fringe, red border and one blue star on white field signifying that this family had a young man or woman serving in the armed forces. Sometimes, the star in the white field was a gold star, marking the home of a family whose son had been killed serving in the armed forces. One walked by those windows somberly, mentally tipping the hat in respect for the fallen.

*People have suffered something terrible in this house. The house with the gold star was a blighted house.*<sup>117</sup>

As the war wound down, I read avidly in the *Times* of the key events: the British Eighth Army's breakthrough at El Alamein and the destruction of Rommel's Afrika Korps, the invasion of Sicily, the landings on the Italian mainland and the bombardment of Monte Cassino.

Then came D-Day, the liberation of Paris and, in December 1944, the German counter-offensive in the Ardennes and the siege of Bastogne. Could the Allies' hard-won gains have been for naught? It seemed so for several weeks, until General Patton's entire Third Army wheeled northward from Alsace and relieved the beleaguered GIs holed up in Bastogne. Within weeks, we read of the crossing of the Rhine, the link-up with Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia and the last days of the Third Reich. On April 28, 1945, Italian partisans captured and executed Il Duce, Benito Mussolini, and his mistress, Clara Petacci. I examined with a mixture of horror and fascination the famous photo of the two of them, beaten and bloodied, hanging by their ankles like sides of beef from an overhead beam. *Sic semper tyrannis!*

Finally, on May 9, 1945, came the headlines we had been waiting for, in type as large as that which had marked the start of the war four years before: “VICTORY! WAR ENDS IN EUROPE,” and on the inside page the photograph of Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt and other German generals signing the documents of unconditional surrender at the City Hall in Rheims, France.

When the war in Europe ended I had just turned 11 years old. I shared in the jubilation of that day, as I had shared in the overwhelming shock and sadness a month earlier, on April 12, 1945, when the news came over the radio that President Roosevelt had died. It was a shock to every American, because, having led the United States out of the terrible Depression and to victory in the War, he seemed almost immortal. It was a shock especially to children my age, because we had never known any other president. After the funeral services in Washington, his casket was borne on a slow-moving train to Pennsylvania Station in New York City. There it was transferred to a hearse for the drive to the President’s final resting place at Hyde Park. From her bedroom window, Grandmother and I witnessed the last leg of that journey. Somber and respectful, we stood and watched as the funeral cortege—the black hearse, the limousines bearing the family and the police motorcycle escort—made its way slowly northward on the Henry Hudson Parkway toward Hyde Park.

The war in the Pacific endured for another three months. When, in early summer 1945, Soviet troops entered Manchuria and headed south against light opposition, I sensed that this was the final nail in the coffin, not knowing of the devastating blow that was still to come. A week later, the hammer fell on the anvil: the first atom bomb exploded over Hiroshima, followed three days later by the second one, on Nagasaki. Like other Americans, I knew how hard it had been to subdue the Japanese troops on Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Peleliu, Iwo Jima and, finally, Okinawa. I had seen the movies showing how the Japanese had tortured and bayoneted American prisoners. If the Japanese were now dying by the thousands, victims of those atomic bomb attacks and other equally devastating air raids, that seemed to me to be just recompense for what Japan had done to us, a terrible wrong finally righted. We had confidence in our new president, Harry Truman, to do what was necessary to bring the war to the quickest possible conclusion. I shared with all other Americans, and especially with those combat-weary troops

poised to invade the Japanese islands, feelings of joy, exaltation and relief when the Japanese surrendered without the need for that invasion.

In later years, I wondered why the A-bomb could not have been exploded in Tokyo harbor to demonstrate its awesome power, or on an island in the Inland Sea. Was it strategically necessary to drop that second bomb on Nagasaki? Was it necessary to kill tens of thousands of Japanese civilians to achieve an end to the fighting? Those doubts came later. Others, older and morally more evolved, even then had a different view. Hannah Arendt was deeply offended by what she called Truman's "outrageous jubilation" at the dropping of the bomb. Other German-Jewish intellectuals, refugees from Hitler, publicly stated that the nuclear explosion over Hiroshima made them ashamed to be Americans. I did not share their disgust. Along with most other Americans, and especially the German-Jewish refugees, I had a childish faith and confidence in our leaders, instilled over President Roosevelt's years as president. That faith and confidence was so ingrained in us that it was impossible at that time, in mid-1945, to believe that a presidential decision could be made from any but the noblest of motives or to meet the direst of contingencies.

With the war over on the Pacific Theatre as well, the great transformation to peacetime began for Americans. For some Jews, it was a joyous time, with families torn asunder by the war reunited after years of privation and struggle simply to stay alive. For most immigrant Jews, our family among them, it was an excruciatingly painful time, a time when they learned for certain what they had long feared: that their loved ones were among the millions confirmed to have been killed in the death camps. Hildegard Kolbe, a friend of Grete Wolff's and herself an immigrant from Germany to the United States, had returned to Germany at war's end to teach in the schools for US Army dependents then being established in the American zone of occupied Germany. On arriving in Germany, Hildegard made inquiries of the International Red Cross about the fate of our relatives. The Red Cross confirmed my family's worst fears: that my great-grandmother, Clara Lewin, and my great-aunt Trudchen had both died of typhus at Theresienstadt.

Not long after the war, I was eating at the Belmont Cafeteria, a grimy eatery on Seventh Avenue in New York's garment district. Near me, a woman of perhaps 40 sat alone, nervously inhaling from

a cigarette and drinking black coffee. Everything about her seemed faded, from her milky-blue eyes to her dirty-blonde hair and ashen skin. She looked out into space, focusing on nothing. Her features were frozen into a silent scream, which, seeing her again in the mind's eye, I liken to the face of the woman in Edvard Munch's painting, "The Scream." Perhaps she was one of those death camp survivors, with that tell-tale number tattooed on her forearm. Alive, yes, but in a real sense, they were "dead men walking," permanently maimed by their memories. Elie Wiesel recalled such men—the other inmates called them "Muselmänner"—in the death camps:

*Wrapped in their torn blankets, they would sit or lie on the ground, staring vacantly into space, unaware of who or where they were, strangers to their surroundings. They no longer felt pain, hunger, thirst. They feared nothing. They felt nothing. They were dead and did not know it.*<sup>118</sup>

That woman at the Belmont Cafeteria—perhaps she, too, was a survivor, and now only a hollow shade of her former self, like those *Muselmänner*.

## LEISURE TIME I — WEEKENDS WITH MOTHER

The child, it has been truly said, learns far more of the world around him outside the classroom than in it. In school the child learns what the educators prescribe; outside its walls, he follows his interests or develops new ones. Recalling his childhood in New York, the playwright Neil Simon has aptly written:

*You go to public schools for your ABC's, but you get your D's to Z's on the pavement of the city streets. Out there, your friends are waiting for the games to start and you learn how to play ball, how to meet girls and how to run as fast as you can when the gangs of an adjoining neighborhood chase you.*<sup>119</sup>

Out there, in the world outside the classroom walls, the child absorbs what he was previously unaware of or indifferent to. He learns of that external world and his role in it; more important, from his relationships with others he takes the measure of who he is and who he is not. For me, as for other children, that important information came, yes, in the schoolyard, but also at the dinner table; in the newspapers, books and magazines that I read and the radio programs I listened to; during Saturday movie matinees; and weekend expeditions with Mother.

Since Mother could not afford to pay for weekend babysitters for Ben and me, we went where she went. In good weather, the three of us, along with other German-Jewish émigrés in the neighborhood, went on a *spaziergang* (stroll) down the New Way, the

riverfront promenade at the end of Dyckman Street. Once there, we would sit down on one of the westward-facing benches to enjoy the river view and bask in the afternoon sun. On other occasions, we went on Sunday afternoon strolls with Mother's friends and their children in the neighborhood parks.

In springtime we climbed the walkway that spirals to the top of Fort Tryon Park to visit the Cloisters and the formal gardens that lay between the Cloisters and the southern entrance to the park. Designed by the noted landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, the gardens were a favorite sunning place for young mothers, pushing their babies in their elegant glossy-blue prams. The elderly, too, enjoyed these gardens: they would sit decorously on the benches lining the walkways, their heads tilted back to enjoy the afternoon sun. In the early spring, the elderly would go out even in unseasonably chilly weather, the women pulling their fur-trimmed coats higher onto their necks and shoulders and burying their hands and forearms in Persian lamb astrakhan muffs, their husbands, sitting next to them, pulling up the collars of their black overcoats and pulling their gray fedoras lower down on their heads. In Berlin, Frankfurt and smaller cities and towns all across Germany, these elderly men and women might have taken their Sunday stroll through just such a park or along a lakeshore or riverfront. Now they ambled through the Fort Tryon gardens, pausing now and then, as I did, to examine the signs giving the English and Latin names of the trees, shrubs, herbs and flowers.

Triggering recollections that echo mine, the central figure in Robert Stone's *Damascus Gate* observes other customers at a café on the shores of the Dead Sea:

*Halfway through his first beer, Lucas became aware that the people at the tables nearest him were speaking German. But they were not Germans, he realized at once, not really. They were elderly German-speaking Israelis, "yekkes" come for the minerals and the hydrotherapy. \* \* \* Hearing their voices reminded him of walks he had taken as a boy in New York from the Upper West Side to the Cloisters. In Fort Tryon Park there had been a stand that sold good grilled frankfurters and hot mustard to go with them. He had always thought of it as the best hot dog stand in New York, and it was patronized in all weathers by German-Jewish refugees from Washington Heights.<sup>120</sup>*

Perhaps there really was such a hot dog stand; if so, I don't remember it. I do recall the café built up against the glacial rock outcropping on the path that wound up to the Cloisters, a hundred yards or so downhill from its entrance. The man who operated that café knew what his customers, the real-life kin to those described in Stone's book, wanted after a tiring afternoon at the Cloisters, or perhaps during a convenient rest stop before finishing the climb to the top. Depending on the season, they ordered their ice coffee or hot tea, or fresh lemonade, and perhaps little tea sandwiches spread with liverwurst or roast beef. These they enjoyed while sitting at tables placed outside the café, at the edge of the walkway. Many times as a child, and occasionally as an adult, I too enjoyed that café.

When Ben and I were little, Mother often took us to the playground at the corner of Payson Avenue and Dyckman Street. There she would sit with her friends and other mothers on the park benches, keeping an eye on us as we played on the swings, the seesaws and the monkey bars. On hot summer days, the sprinkler in the center of the concrete pool was turned on, and we children in our bathing suits would dash back and forth through the sprinkler. In cooler weather, I would kick my red scooter around the playground, envying the other children their elegant Schwinn tricycles with the iridescent-violet frames and the flaring silver nacelles on the rear wheels. I envied still more the boys my age who careened around the playground in their red metal cars and fire engines. These playthings seemed unattainable to me.

Annually, Mother, Ben and I made a pilgrimage to Father's grave in Cedar Park Cemetery at River Edge, New Jersey. The Red & Tan Lines bus carried us from the terminal on the Manhattan side of the George Washington Bridge to the cemetery gates. From there we walked the rest of the way. We knew the general vicinity of the grave but, even though we consulted the map we had been given at the cemetery office, Father's grave was always hard to find because it was not in the front row and stood shoulder to shoulder, as it were, with other markers. When we finally found it, the three of us would say *Kaddish*, the Jewish mourners' prayer. I learned that prayer by heart at all too young an age. Then we would scavenge the vicinity to find stones to place on the headstone, in keeping with the ancient Jewish custom.<sup>121</sup> We never took the stones from a neighboring grave; that would have been disrespectful to the dead.

There would be a moment's silence to allow Mother to be alone with her reflections before we turned and headed back to the entrance. Occasionally, we found a bench under one of the few trees that served to shield visitors from the hot summer sun, and ate a sandwich lunch there before catching the bus back to the city.

Mother had a galaxy of friends. Some she had known as a schoolgirl in Berlin, others were co-workers or new friends she had made since arriving in New York. Every one of them was Jewish, or of Jewish origin, and most of them were specifically German Jews as we were. A strange and memorable assortment, I came to know them all. Let me introduce them.

Mother's oldest friend, going back to their schooldays in Berlin, was Marga Franck. When I knew her, she was short and stout, with black hair, dark brown eyes, puffy eyelids and a perpetually careworn expression. Marga and her husband, Wolf, and their son, Michael, lived in a dingy fourth-floor railroad flat on Amsterdam Avenue.

Although they were Jewish enough to face annihilation at the hands of the Nazis, the Francks were not at all observant. As a small boy, age 3, I must have overheard conversations between my parents on this subject. The Francks were living in Paris then, as we were. In a letter home, Father mentions that Mother had gone to visit the Francks, leaving him in our hotel room to babysit for me. I stayed home because my parents couldn't risk the embarrassment that, in the Francks' presence, I might burst into my favorite chant: "*Oy, oy, oy, Michael ist ein goy* [Gentile]."

After finding refuge in New York, the Francks eked out a marginal existence. Marga, trained as a librarian, had a steady job as a cataloguer at the H. W. Wilson Co. in the Highbridge section of the Bronx. That building is a local landmark. Driving north on Manhattan's Harlem River Drive, you can see it on the other side of the river, just to the north of Yankee Stadium. It's the building with the lighthouse on the roof.

Marga's husband, a journalist in Berlin before the war, had no dependable source of income now. She was the family breadwinner, a role that must have caused some psychic pain both to her and to her husband. When I knew them, they no longer shared a bed, probably had not done so in years. Indeed, they slept in separate bedrooms. Wolf had the large front room, his extensive collection of classical phonograph records on shelves arranged to form a

protective cocoon around his bed. Marga slept in a tiny bedroom toward the rear of the apartment, its only window opening onto a dark and grimy airshaft.

Wolf Franck was a burly bear of a man, with a thick torso, muscular forearms and wrists and large meaty hands. His steel-gray hair was combed straight back in the style of the German intellectual. His flinty ice-blue eyes seemed to bore right through me. He spoke in a deep rasping voice through thin compressed lips.

When, having climbed those four flights of stairs, we reached the Francks' apartment door, Wolf would open it, his bulk filling the doorway. He would greet me gruffly and then (something I knew was coming and always dreaded) grasp my right hand in a welcoming handshake. He would first crush my hand in that hamfist of his, then give a little downward pull at the end as if to bring me into submission. Another vignette: we are at the kitchen table, everyone talking with great animation. In the midst of this back-and-forth, Wolf Franck slams his fist down on the table, causing the china to clatter, and bellows at his wife, "*Halt's Maul! Ich spreche jetzt!*" ("Shut your trap! Now it's my turn to speak!") and he does.

The end of the story: to augment the family's meager income, the Francks took in a young woman as a lodger. She was the snake in the garden, at least from Marga's point of view, because the lodger and Wolf Franck fell in love, and he asked Marga for a divorce. After much bitterness, the divorce was granted. I could never understand why Marga so strongly opposed it. Her marriage had been dead in every respect except legally for years. Once the marriage had been dissolved, Wolf married the young lady and had two children, daughters, when he must have already been in his early 60's. Michael, two years older than I, went on to become a lawyer and then, a few years later, was appointed executive director of the Michigan Bar Association in Lansing, where he remained until his death in 1994.

Another friend, Clara Mayer, lived in one of the apartment houses further up Seaman Avenue from ours. Whether she was a friend of my parents or a distant relative of ours, I don't know. She was the homeliest woman I have ever met: in her 40's then, she was short, rail-thin and stooped-over, with stringy black hair hanging limply from her head, a sallow olive complexion, little deposits of fat on each side of the bridge of her nose, and a voice that came

from deep down in her chest, almost like a bullfrog's croaking. Her aged mother, Sabine, lived with her in that apartment. Hard of hearing, Sabine used an ear trumpet. To make yourself heard, you shouted into that instrument. To let Sabine know that the phone was ringing and that she must answer it, there was also what I as a young boy considered a technological marvel: a system of wires and lights strung around the apartment, which flashed on when the telephone rang.

When Sabine died, I assumed that Clara Mayer would spend her remaining years alone in that apartment. But, not long after her mother's death, she introduced me to Otto, the man she had recently married. I never learned whether she had had a relationship with him for many years, forsaking marriage to take care of her aged mother, or whether they had met only after the mother's death. Otto was a quite different sort from Clara: shorter than average, but trim, with an athletic build, keen eyes and a sunny disposition, hair cut short in a military buzz cut and, what was most noticeable, a dueling scar running down the left side of his face from temple to jowl. Americans, seeing that scar, might find it disfiguring, but, to Germans of a certain class, such a scar was a mark of distinction, a prized badge of honor. The scars typically dated back to a man's university days, the lasting evidence of a duel he had fought for his fraternity's honor or his own. Perhaps Otto was a *mischling* (the child of a mixed marriage with one Jewish parent or a Jewish grandparent) and therefore eligible in pre-Hitler days to join such a fraternity. Since Jews were not accepted into these dueling fraternities, perhaps he had been a member of one of the Jewish fraternities established to compensate for that exclusion, and had demanded and received satisfaction for some slight. On the other hand, I may be romanticizing that scar; there may have been a much more prosaic reason for it. At any event, I was dumbfounded that there was now a man in Clara Mayer's life. I was equally amazed that Otto had been so attracted to Clara as to marry her. How could any man, I wondered, be drawn to her? At that age, I had not yet learned the important lesson that there's no rational explanation for the chemistry that draws a man and a woman together and causes them to unite for a lifetime. James Boswell would have chided me as he chided those who professed not to understand Samuel Johnson's love for his wife, by saying that

*love is not a subject of reasoning, but of feeling, and therefore there are no common principles upon which one can persuade another concerning it. Every man feels for himself, and knows how he is affected by particular qualities in the person he admires, the impressions of which are too minute and delicate to be substantiated in language.*<sup>122</sup>

Monica Marcu was another former classmate of Mother's and now her friend in adulthood. She was in the same life situation as Mother: widowed prematurely, left with two small daughters to raise. Monica was thin, almost anorexic, we would say today, with close-cropped dark hair, sunken cheeks, a skin yellowed from years of cigarette smoking. On one memorable Sunday afternoon visit, while Mother and Monica talked in the living room, Ben and I were with Monica's two daughters in their bedroom. I must have been 15, Ben 13, the girls the same ages. From out of nowhere, the older sister said, "Let's take our clothes off." No doctor-and-patient, or nurse-and-patient, games anymore, just a straightforward suggestion to "get naked." Hardly believing my ears, I looked at Ben with consternation. You mean, we all take our clothes off? And then what? Fortunately, Mother entered the room soon after and announced that the visit was over; it was time to go home. I can imagine what would have happened if the girl had made that suggestion a half-hour earlier and we had begun to act on it.

Meira Pimsleur had been a student of Mother's at Hunter College, early on, and remained one of her close friends for years after. From an abundance of generosity and affection and always in good humor, Meira constantly went out of her way to make life easy for Mother. As far as I could tell, it was a one-way relationship; Mother did not respond in the same way to Meira. I never had the sense that Mother drew emotional nourishment from Meira, as Meira seemingly did from her. It was Meira, for example, who at Mother's request took Benjamin in for one year, the same year in which I was "farmed out" to Grandmother's house. Perhaps Meira had a strong need to have others be in debt to her. Lord knows, there was little enough joy in her life. Her job as a librarian at Columbia University provided a small but dependable income. Her husband, Solomon, on the other hand, had no steady job, no steady income. He was a composer, spending his days at the piano and composing music in the Romantic vein which was hardly ever

played or heard. Meira, the breadwinner, supported her husband and their two sons, Paul and Joel.

Of Paul Pimsleur, the older son, much was expected; he had had a top-flight education, capped by a doctorate in linguistics, and had a tenured position on the faculty of the State University at Albany. There he developed a test to measure aptitude for language-learning. Tragically, Paul Pimsleur died of a heart attack at 48. He lives on, however, in a series of CD-ROMs now on sale “wherever books are sold,” which teach foreign languages by “the Pimsleur Method.”

Joel, the younger son, was Ben’s age. His presence in the Pimsleur household made it “natural” for Ben to spend that year with them while I lived with my grandparents. When Ben and Joel were older, in their late teens, the two of them hitchhiked across the country together, ending in San Francisco. Joel must have become enamored of San Francisco on that trip, because, after college, he returned and became a reporter for the San Francisco *Chronicle*. He wrote for the *Chronicle* for 31 years, covering the police beat for that newspaper, until 1999.

Solly Pimsleur was a profoundly depressed man, on the heavy side, with a fringe of silver hair like a halo across the back of his head, and dark mournful eyes. He hardly ever spoke. His presence in the apartment and, probably, in the family, was almost invisible. The day came when the income that Meira was bringing in could not support the family, or perhaps she rebelled at continuing to carry the burden singlehandedly. Solomon Pimsleur, then already in his late 50’s, had to get a job. This would be difficult because he had no marketable skills other than his musical training. Finally he found a job as an intake worker for the New York City Welfare Department. When I heard that, I was horrified. It seemed like the final debasement, almost like licking the dust, that an artist, and he was that even if he had achieved no recognition for his art, had to work for the Welfare Department in a job which served neither him nor the City. Ah, Fortuna can be cruel!

Ironically, when Sol Pimsleur’s works were finally played in public, he was not there to hear them. At Meira’s request, they were played at his funeral. Meira died a few years later, of liver disease.

Were the similarities between Mother’s two best friends, Marga Franck and Meira Pimsleur, a case of Jungian synchronicity? Both were librarians, both were women who, perforce and not of their

own will, were the family breadwinners, married to men who could not make their way in the world, and both of them were battered by life's daily struggles. Meira, though, put on a brave face against adversity, with a grin-and-bear-it attitude, as if to say, "If I don't keep laughing, I'll start to cry," while Marga's face was set in a perpetually dour grimace.

Life had treated other friends of Mother's, Leopold (Leo) and Karen Gutmann, more kindly. Leo, I was told, was an officer of a Wall Street financial institution. His appearance and bearing commanded respect, and he certainly received it from me. I looked upon him, and upon his wife, as the paragons of refinement and *savoir-faire*. Leo was always impeccably dressed in a well-cut pinstriped suit; his thick silver hair combed back sleekly from his temples. His face was dominated by a patrician nose and probing blue eyes. Karen, many years younger than Leo, was tall, with a full figure and long brunette hair down to the shoulders, reminding me of Rita Hayworth in the 1946 hit film "Gilda." She spoke in a slow, languid manner, with an attractive Continental accent. She came by the accent legitimately: her father was Arthur Rosin, head of one of the two Jewish-owned banks in Berlin before the war; her mother was Danish. The Gutmanns had one daughter, Marianne, five years older than I, a University of Chicago graduate.

When Mother and I visited the Gutmanns at their apartment at 145 East 92d Street, across the street from the YMHA, their cook-housekeeper would greet us at the door, lead us into the living room and invite us to sit down on the couch to await our hosts' arrival. Theirs was the elegantly furnished living room of the haute bourgeoisie: a baby grand piano at the far end, by the windows; on the far wall, glass-doored mahogany bookcases in the Biedermeier style, holding Leo Gutmann's excellent library; oriental carpets on the floor and original oils on the wall. Several of the latter were by Lovis Corinth, the German Expressionist artist whom Karen's father had befriended in Berlin.

Moments later, the Gutmanns would emerge from their bedroom, and, after some casual chitchat, we would all enter the dining room for dinner. Whenever we ate there, I was intimidated by the beautiful china, silver and crystal, and worked hard to observe all the rules that I had learned at Grandmother's dinner table, especially the ones about wiping my mouth before taking the crystal water goblet to my lips, and keeping my left elbow off the

table. When our plates were empty, Karen rang the little glass bell at her side, summoning the cook to remove the dishes and bring in the next course.

The Gutmanns were not observant Jews but they never denied or turned their back on their Jewishness. In 1958, their daughter, Marianne, married Leonard R. Sussman,<sup>123</sup> who at the time was employed by the American Council for Judaism (ACJ), eventually becoming its director. The ACJ is in the vanguard of that minority of American Jews who hold that one can be Jewish without being a Zionist. It rejects the notion that Israel has a special place in the allegiance of American Jews and contends that it does not deserve any significant support from the government of the United States.<sup>124</sup> It caused the Gutmanns considerable discomfort that their son-in-law was employed by that organization. Later, Sussman found employment more acceptable to his in-laws at Freedom House, across the street from Bryant Park. He remained there for the rest of his working career, rising to become its executive director. The ACJ still exists today, but the growth and vigor of the State of Israel and the ongoing dangers it confronts have made the organization a political outlier.<sup>125</sup>

Like Meira Pimsleur, the Gutmanns, too, were kind and giving of themselves to Mother, but she had not much to offer to them in return. However, without their knowing it, they meant a great deal to me, playing a large role in my psychic panorama. Theirs was the genteel existence that I strove to attain. If I could not live it, I could at least emulate them in the way they conducted themselves. Eventually, Mother lost contact with the Gutmanns, but they continued to live on in my aspirations.

In an elegantly furnished suite at the Hotel des Artistes, a landmark building at the corner of 57th Street and Seventh Avenue, Mother and I occasionally visited an elderly woman, her name and connection to our family now forgotten. The classic dowager, she wore a somber black dress, her silver hair beautifully coiffed in a pile atop her head. She was the grandmother of Anthony and Christopher (Kit) Lukas, and thereby hangs the tale. She was not only their grandmother but their guardian as well: the two boys lived with her in that elaborately-furnished suite, when they were not out-of-town at boarding school.

Tony Lukas was my age, but I never met him or his younger brother; they must have been away at boarding school on our visits

to their grandmother. Years earlier, when Tony was eight years old, he was away at camp when his mother, back in New York City, decided that she had had enough of life and ended it. Imagine being at camp, amongst other boys your age in the dining hall or the social hall, or in your cabin, and being asked to come to the director's office, to be told that your mother was suddenly dead, by her own hand. The father died soon thereafter, of tuberculosis. After that double loss, their grandmother, far past child-rearing age, had stepped in to play that role, there being then no one else to care for the boys.

Lukas went on to Harvard University and, after a stint at the *Baltimore Sun*, moved to the *New York Times* national desk, covering the civil rights movement in the 1960's. After leaving the *Times*, he gained a national reputation as the author of well-received books, chief among them being *Common Ground*,<sup>125</sup> an account of the Boston school desegregation battles in the 1960's and 1970's. A contemporary writer referred to Lukas as the "*patron saint to a generation of non-fiction writers.*"<sup>126</sup>

Lukas fought a lifelong battle against depression. At age 64, he apparently felt that he had no more bestsellers in him and had, in fact, nothing more to say. Worn down by the constant struggle against the demons that beset him, Lukas, following in his mother's footsteps fifty-six years earlier, killed himself. His suicide bewildered his many friends who, while aware of his struggle, could not explain or justify this final act of resignation.

My visits to these friends of Mother's were never made grudgingly on my part. I accepted it as entirely normal that I would accompany Mother on these occasions. Nor, with the exception of the afternoon at Monica Marcu's apartment that I have described, did I retire to play with her friends' children, my contemporaries. The afternoons were spent with the grown-ups at the kitchen table, sitting quietly as they drank their tea or coffee and nibbled on pastries and listening to their animated conversation.

In addition to the incident with Monica Marcu's daughters, I recall straying from Mother's side on another occasion. We were visiting with Tina and Lou Hess in their apartment on East 96th Street. Tina and Lou had a daughter, perhaps five years old, and a newborn baby girl. At a certain point in the afternoon, Tina retired to the bedroom with the baby. When I asked the older girl why Tina had disappeared into the bedroom and closed the French

doors behind her, she explained that her Mommy was nursing the baby. In my childhood ignorance, I thought that “nursing the baby” meant that Tina was giving it some sort of medical care. Opening the bedroom door to watch, I found Tina on the bed, the baby suckling at her bare breast. In this way, as a boy of perhaps ten, I found out that the word “nurse” had a meaning that I not been aware of before. Tina was entirely relaxed at my intrusion. I watched, fascinated, but embarrassed and tongue-tied. Barely a minute later, I turned on my heels and left the room, my education measurably expanded by the experience.

In Mother’s company, we also visited family members, especially aunts and uncles on both sides. In the years after her arrival in New York, Mother’s younger sister, Steffi, worked as a mother’s helper, living in a succession of furnished rooms or with the families of the children whom she was tending. Because she could not entertain, on her days off she visited us instead. She was also active in the New World Club, an organization of German-American Jewish singles. In warm weather she would go on weekend outings with that group. During the war, many women in the New World Club wrote letters and sent packages to American Jewish soldiers in the war zone, and many permanent relationships were formed from those contacts. My aunt Steffi told me that she did not take part in those activities, because she was still engaged to Heinz Behrend and had not yet learned of his death at the hands of the Nazis.

Mother’s brother, Helmut, and his family arrived in New York in 1951, having spent the war years in Bolivia. As a young man, Helmut, born in 1911, had worked in a Berlin bank. When Helmut and Hilde, then recently wed, sought to escape from Nazi Germany in the late 1930’s, they were unable to get visas to immigrate to the United States. Along with other increasingly desperate Jews, they went from one embassy to another in their effort to get out of Germany. Finally, at the eleventh hour, they found salvation in the Bolivian consul general, who was issuing visas to Jews willing to farm the thinly populated uplands of northern Bolivia. Helmut, a city dweller all his life, had no knowledge of farming and no intention of learning it. But, having indicated his willingness to farm the land, Helmut obtained the treasured visas from the Bolivian consul. Once in Bolivia, the family remained in the capital city, La Paz, eventually opening a second-hand furniture store there.<sup>127</sup>

After the war, the German-Jewish community in Bolivia, which had found there a haven from Nazi persecution, was decimated not by extermination but by emigration. Having decided, because of the political unrest in Bolivia, that there was no long-term future for them there, almost all of them emigrated, either to Israel or to the United States. Helmut and his family were part of that mass postwar out-migration from Bolivia. Wanting to be near his sisters and other relatives and friends, Helmut and his family were among those who came to the United States.

Within days after his arrival in America, Helmut found the opportunity he was seeking in the new land. While riding in a taxicab in Manhattan, Helmut started a conversation with the cabdriver, explaining that he had just come to America and was looking for a retail business to buy into. The cabdriver told him that he knew of a variety store that was available for purchase in downtown Fort Lee, New Jersey. With the savings that they had amassed in Bolivia, the Feilers bought that store, the Atlas 5¢ and 10¢ Store on Main Street, and operated it until his death in 1994. Over the years, they became fixtures in Fort Lee, well-respected in the business community and beloved by their steady customers. They were kind to their employees and gave generously to local causes.

Mother, Ben and I made many visits to Fort Lee to see Helmut and Hilde and their children, our cousins, Susan and Michael. Unfailingly, whenever Ben and I came to the store, Helmut and Hilde would urge us to take something from the shelves as a gift for ourselves. In this and in many other ways, Helmut and Hilde showed their affection for their new family. With Mother it was different. She felt that she had little in common with Helmut and her sister-in-law, that their outlook was impossibly provincial. Helmut enjoyed gambling in Atlantic City and weekends in the Catskills; he loved his work and also enjoyed talking with me about the stock market and politics. Mother had no interest in those spheres. On their part, Helmut and Hilde could not share in Mother's more rarefied interests.

They differed, too, in their approach to their former homeland, Germany. Mother was very rigid on this subject. To return to Germany after the war was unthinkable and to buy German products, such as Volkswagens, equally so. Helmut and Hilde had no such qualms. Remembering with pleasure the summers his

family had spent in Baden Baden as he was growing up, Helmut took Hilde on many summer vacations back to that spa. Hilde also stayed in touch with her high school classmates in Aschaffenburg, a town not far from the city of Frankfurt. Years after the war, she attended a reunion of her high school class. Speaking of that event, Hilde told me that there was only one classmate whom she did not care to see again: a girl who in the 1930's had joined the *Bund Deutsche Mädchen* (the equivalent for teen-age girls of the *Hitler Jugend*). When she learned that this girl had since died, Hilde felt that she was free to attend the reunion.

Mother and I, then 16, were returning from one of our visits to the Feilers in Fort Lee when I had a close encounter with death or serious injury. We were standing together at a curbside in downtown Fort Lee, alongside a bench placed there for use by those waiting for the bus back to New York. Out of the corner of my left eye I saw a car coming toward me at speed, its right front wheel already atop the curb. Panic froze me into immobility; I moved neither forward into the street nor backwards away from the curb. Continuing on its dangerous path, the car came straight at me and hit me, slamming me into the concrete stanchion of the bench.

Thrown to the ground, I first checked to see if I was alive or dead, determined that I was still alive, and became aware of Mother a few yards away, in the street, screaming hysterically. I rose to my feet and approached the driver of the car, a boy my age who probably had only recently obtained his driver's license. His face was ashen pale from the shock of what had just happened. Through the open car window, I began screaming at him, hurling the worst obscenities at him to release the tension from that narrow brush with calamity. Soon an ambulance appeared to take me to the nearby hospital. In the emergency room the doctors checked me out and found that I had only a sprained ankle. Within minutes they wrapped the ankle in an Ace bandage and sent me home. Total cost: \$35.00. Helmut Feiler urged us to sue, insisting that we could recover a substantial sum of money for my pain and suffering, but we were content to recover only our out-of-pocket costs. Believing that, at that moment, God was watching over me, I responded with a silent prayer of gratitude.

We also visited, less frequently, my Aunt Gabie (Gabrielle) and her then-husband, Maurice Koenigsberg, first in their apartment on Munn Avenue in Irvington, a suburb of Newark, New Jersey (this

must have been right after the war), and later in their trim colonial house in Millburn, a bedroom suburb west of the city. They had two daughters, June, born in 1944, and Claire, born in 1948. I was in my early teens when we visited them in Millburn. On one such visit, Maurice and I were standing in the driveway, alongside the front lawn of the house. As we talked, he bent down to pick up a cigarette butt from among the blades of carefully-trimmed grass. A city boy all my life, I thought it ridiculous to be so concerned about your front lawn that you would bend down for a cigarette butt! Who else would notice it? Did I bend down to pick up every cigarette butt on the sidewalk in front of my building? Of course not! But years later, after I became a homeowner, I would find myself, to my chagrin, doing the same.

Koenigsberg was an able amateur violinist. As a young man, before sound came to Hollywood films, he worked in Newark movie houses, providing the musical accompaniment to the action on the screen. Now, three decades later, he was still compulsive about getting in his practice time on the instrument, even when it interfered with his daughters' concentration on their homework assignments, and he refused to adjust to their needs.

Whatever his other talents, Maurice was neither a good husband nor a good father. To grow up with that man in the house inflicted psychic wounds on his daughters that took years to overcome. On one of our visits to the house in Millburn, June did something that stirred her father to anger. In my presence, Maurice seized his belt buckle. That's all he did, just grabbed the buckle. Little June, who must have been six or seven at the time, cried out "No, Daddy, please don't," and cringed, anticipating that a strapping would follow. Maurice did not follow through on that occasion, but the simple act of grasping the belt buckle was enough to evoke terror in his daughter, bringing a self-satisfied smirk to her father's lips. Watching this, I was horrified that the man had so little self-control that he would do this in the presence of outsiders, and felt infinite pity for my cousins, who had to suffer under the same roof with him. In the mid-1960's, Aunt Gabie, working as a school secretary, fell in love with Raymond Forrest, one of the science teachers at that school. She divorced Maurice, married Raymond and found a measure of happiness with him in her later years.

Mother's friends and our relatives had one thing in common: they were generally of somber mien. Hardly ever, in my presence,

did they give out the full-throated laugh which psychologists and physiologists claim to be a tonic for body and soul. Perhaps they had been taught as children, growing up in Europe, that a person too much given to unrestrained laughter could not be taken seriously. Perhaps that sober mien stemmed from the emotional blows they had endured in childhood, or in Nazi Germany, or in being uprooted and having to adjust to this new society. Perhaps, finally, it was the hardships they had encountered in this country. In any case, gales of laughter were never heard around the dinner table when I was growing up; chuckles or smiles were the most one could expect. It may be the sadness that surrounded me as a child that has made me value humor all the more, whether it be a cartoon, a good off-color joke or a witty remark. If laughter is truly, as a Reader's Digest feature says, "the best medicine," then I need large and frequent doses of it and I try to administer it in the same measure to others as well. I treasure humor in all its forms and welcome its tonic therapy, from the wry smile at one end to unrestrained breath-taking laughter at the other.

Mother's world was, for the most part, a woman's world, and so was mine. I grew up in a fatherless household, in the presence of my mother and other strong women who were making great sacrifices to keep their families together. This was a world where, more often than not, men played diminished roles even when, as in my grandfather's case, they were men of accomplishment who had received international recognition. As a result, I learned early on to speak the language of women and to feel comfortable in it. My need to connect was filled principally by women. I found it easy, and pleasurable, to trim my sails to ingratiate myself with them. Did not Marcel Proust come at the world from much the same direction? On the other hand, this predilection for feminine companionship may have been a symptom of what Beth Erickson has called the "father-wound." She writes that "*men who did not have fathers to initiate them into manhood become very dependent on women . . . to define them.*"<sup>128</sup>

Perhaps that explains why, as I entered my teens and throughout my 20's, I relished the "dating game" and my transitory relationships with women until, as so often happened, they turned sour and ended. Conversely, the bonhomie that boys and men enjoy in each other's presence did not come easily to me. I found it difficult to sustain close friendships with other boys and men

All that lay in the decades ahead. Returning to “life with Mother,” there were, in addition to the visits to friends and relatives, trips at her side to other destinations. During the war years I frequently spent Saturday mornings at her office, anticipating by sixty years the current trend to “bring your child to the workplace.” Like most others in the labor force at that time, Mother had to work a half-day on Saturdays and I could not be left alone at home. I was expected to entertain myself all morning at her office while the staff went about its work.

At that time, in the early 1940’s, Mother was working for the International Auxiliary Language Association (IALA). Its offices were in the Graybar Building at 44th Street and Lexington Avenue, adjacent to Grand Central Station.

Founded in 1924, IALA was financed by a wealthy woman who believed that understanding among the nations could be achieved only if there were an international language in which diplomats and businessmen could speak and understand each other. A world-traveler might see it as an infringement of the deference owed to his native nation’s sovereignty if he were compelled to speak the language of the host country. The only answer was to develop an entirely new language, one that everyone could learn and speak. The work at IALA involved compiling a dictionary of that proposed international language, to be called Interlingua. Laboriously, the staff entered each word, with its meaning and etymology, on a card which was then filed in its proper place in one of the olive-drab file cabinets that lined the office walls. Some of the words clearly had a Romance origin, some a Slavic derivation; still others were borrowed directly from their Sanskrit root. I could never determine the logic by which each word was developed, or who ultimately made the decision. IALA’s wealthy sponsor died just as the Interlingua dictionary was published in 1951, and the language was never properly promoted. In the event, the postwar emergence of English as the universal tongue made irrelevancies of Interlingua, Esperanto and all such other artificial languages.

The IALA staff seemed to me to be a quirky bunch. The director was Alexander Gode van Esch, then in his 50’s. He was tall, slender and graying, with milky blue eyes, soft-spoken, given to wearing elegant blue pin-striped suits. Gode was a kind and gentle man, venerated by the staff.

Kurt and Alice Bergel were IALA's designated German-language experts. They later moved on to California, first to Deep Springs College in the California desert and then to Chapman College outside of Los Angeles. Mother kept in contact with the Bergels and visited them from time to time at their California home. At their invitation, Mother also spent a summer teaching a course at Chapman. At the end of the summer, the college invited her to join its faculty, but she turned down the offer. She was by then such a confirmed New Yorker that she could not pull up stakes and move across the country. It would have meant separation from family and friends and everything that was important to her.

The French-language expert on the IALA staff was Mme. Françoise Heldt, a tiny sparrow of a woman with green eyes and thick hair dyed rust-red, who always dressed *au dernier cri*. She seemed to be eternally cheerful, speaking animatedly in cultured French or French-accented English. Mother, of course, was a valued contributor in the compilation of the Interlingua dictionary because of her fluency in Spanish and German, her working knowledge of French and her university studies in philology.

When the office closed on Saturday at noon, Mother and I would sometimes eat lunch at Janssen's Restaurant in the Graybar Building. As a youngster, I looked forward to eating there, because the tables were elegantly laid in white tablecloths with white linen napkins and ornate silverplate cutlery. The walls were paneled in deep mahogany and round about were ancient models of Spanish galleons, British men-o'-war and Yankee clipper ships, hanging from the ceiling or mounted on the walls. Eating at Janssen's made me feel special, as if I were a young gentleman out on the town.

It's a shame that so many of the old meat-and-potatoes chophouses have passed into oblivion. Their masculine ambiance and their reliance on heavy cuts of steak and chops, short ribs, meat loaf and mashed potatoes, made them passé in an era of nouvelle cuisine and WeightWatchers. Reviewing the book, *American Places: Encounters with History*,<sup>129</sup> Jonathan Yardley quotes from the text:

*The likes of Durgin Park in Boston, Faidley's Seafood in Baltimore, Keen's in Manhattan, Joe's Stone Crab in Miami Beach and Galatoire's in New Orleans incorporate a density of ambience and collective memory that is the essence of history itself.*

He continues:

*Perhaps the enthusiasm with which I second these observations is colored by the deep affection I have for all of these eating places and for many others like them; old places in which one is joined at the table not merely by one's companions but by the ghosts of diners long-vanished, where one eats not the trendy fare of the day but solid, old-fashioned, hearty American food.*<sup>130</sup>

We went to many other places and events with Mother if they were accessible by subway or bus. They had to be reachable by public transportation because, like most New Yorkers, we did not own a car. Mother, when younger, had not learned to drive. In later years, despite Ben's best efforts to teach her, she could not get the hang of it.

From time to time, Mother took us to the theatre. That we sat in the second balcony, up in the clouds, so to speak, did not interfere with our enjoyment of the play. In those days, well-trained actors and actresses could project their voices to the farthest seat in the house without the aid of electronic contrivances. So we saw from a distance such landmarks of the Broadway stage as "Life with Father" and "I Remember Mama," Marc Blitzstein's "Green Pastures," Kurt Weill's "Lost in the Stars" and Jan de Hartog's "Skipper Next to God," about the ill-fated voyage of the *S.S. St. Louis*, carrying desperate Jewish refugees just before the War. Mother had no taste for, or interest in, conventional musicals, even though the 40's and 50's were the heyday of that authentically American art form. I never saw, with her or with anyone else, the original stage presentations of "Oklahoma," "Annie Get Your Gun," "Carousel" and the like.

My visits to elegant "legit" stage theaters with Mother are indelibly connected with another memory: it seemed to me that every time we entered the theater lobby, amid a throng of theatergoers intent, as we were, on getting to their seats, Mother had the notion that our faces were dirty and needed cleaning. With a *Spuck'* [spit] into her handkerchief, she would seize our chins with one hand while we squirmed to get out of her grasp, and with the other hand pass the handkerchief, wet with her saliva, across our faces. Her spit had a peculiarly sour smell to it. That, and the ignominy of having our faces "swiped" in public, is what made the ritual so unpleasant for us.

In warm weather, we looked forward to a full-day excursion on the Hudson River Day Line. At that time, side-wheelers bearing the

names of historically-significant New Yorkers like Peter Stuyvesant, Robert Fulton and Alexander Hamilton plied the river, the remnant of a flotilla of excursion boats that, before the advent of the automobile and six-lane highways, carried New York passengers to Albany, Bridgeport, Boston and Asbury Park. These vessels had been built at the turn of the century and were still, fifty years later, in excellent condition, with white-painted hulls, brightly varnished decks and superstructure and highly polished brass fittings everywhere.

From the pier on the Hudson River at 42d Street, Ben and I would rush up the gangplank, scrambling up the stairs to the top deck, and settle into chairs at the bow of the vessel. Then the engines went into reverse, the ship backed away from the slip, and soon we were out in the middle of the Hudson. After the ship passed under the George Washington Bridge, we would excitedly point out Grandmother's apartment on Riverside Drive. At Tappan Zee, where the river is at its widest, the Tappan Zee Bridge now carries the New York Thruway from Westchester to Rockland County. There was no bridge then. What we saw instead was a graveyard of Liberty ships, lashed gunwale to gunwale, their gray hulls rusting as they rode silently at anchor. They had been decommissioned after the war and were awaiting disposal for scrap or other uses.

The Hudson River Day Line steamers made overnight trips to Albany; my great-grandfather Louis Lewin had made just such a trip in 1887, on his tour of the United States and Canada. There were also day trips to one of two destinations: to Indian Point at Bear Mountain, a state park with ballfields and picnic tables, now the site of the Indian Point nuclear power plant, or to Poughkeepsie, further on up the river. When the Day Line vessel docked there, street urchins would dive into the filthy brackish water around the ship to scoop up the coins that the passengers threw overboard.

It was a welcome signal of my increasing independence when I reached my mid-teens and could choose to accompany Mother on her visits to friends and relatives on weekends or explore New York on my own, or simply stay at home.

## LEISURE TIME II— SPORTS, AT THE MOVIES, BOOKS AND MUSIC

**A**fter school on weekdays and on weekends when Mother had no other plans for us, I often spent my leisure hours on the streets with other boys my age, but I much preferred to be on my own, reading or listening to the radio and diverting myself in other ways.

On the streets of Inwood there was no Little League for boys my age, no formal group of kids, much less an organized club or gang; rather, we played with whomever we found out on the street. Sometimes, looking for a playmate, a boy would come into our courtyard, or yell up from the sidewalk, “Jerry’s mothah . . . Jerry’s mothah! Can Jerry come out to play?” Jerry’s mother would stick her head out the window and shout to the kid on the sidewalk below, “He’ll be right down” or “He’s sick” or “He has to stay in and do his homework.”

When the right number of boys was assembled, the games began. For most of the street games, the only equipment needed was a spaldeen, the pink rubber ball that originally formed the core of a tennis ball. Its manufacturer, the A. C. Spalding Co., started to make the ball without the covering when boys discovered its many uses in street games. In punchball, you threw the pink spaldeen up in the air and punched it on its way down, as in tennis, or you bounced it on the ground and punched it on the rebound. Punchball required enough room to lay out bases and a decent-sized outfield, so it was usually played on the concrete schoolyard

or a grassy field. An even larger area was needed for stickball, played with a sawed-off broomstick, its handle covered with adhesive tape to improve the grip. The impact of the broomhandle bat against the spaldeen could send the ball traveling a great distance, sometimes through an apartment window. When you played stickball in the street, the ball was thrown by the opposing team's pitcher or you would toss the ball into the air yourself and hit it on its way down. If the ball was caught on the fly, you were out; if it landed safely, you counted the number of manholes in the street that the ball traversed before it landed to decide whether the hit was a single, double or triple.

More often, we played curb-ball or stoopball. That only required two boys, the batter and the fielder, the spaldeen, and a curb or stoops (the steps leading from the sidewalk to the door of a building). Standing on the sidewalk or in the "gutter," the batter slammed the ball against the curb or the stoop at an angle, so that it would rebound skyward out into the street. If the fielder caught the rebound on the fly, the batter was out; if the ball got past the fielder, the batter scored a single, or a double or a triple, depending on how many bounces the ball took before it was recovered. Since the batter didn't actually run the bases, it required an elaborate reckoning to keep track of how many runs had been scored. When a car approached, the first boy who saw it would call out "Fins!" (probably a corruption of "finis" or "end") and the game would be interrupted until the car was safely past.

Another game, played without the need to pause for passing cars, was "King," a pint-sized version of handball, played against an apartment house wall. Each player controlled one sidewalk square. The player at the far left was the "King," whom the other players tried to knock from his perch. The ball was put into play and the players slammed it against the wall as in handball. If the "King" missed the ball, he was "demoted" to the far right of the line of players, and the next player to his right became the "King."

Then there was "Running Bases": two bases, usually marked by jackets or caps, were set up about 40 feet apart. There were two fielders, one at each base. The fielders started throwing the spaldeen back and forth. The runner, starting at one base, would try to run to the other before he was tagged out. Then he would take his place as a fielder and one of the fielders became the baserunner.

These street games were entirely impromptu. There were no leagues, no schedules, no player rosters. They required no elaborate equipment, and what equipment we did use could be replaced at very little cost. A spaldeen cost all of 19 cents. But they served the purpose of drawing boys together, developing hand-eye coordination and honing our competitive spirit. I enjoyed them, too, because they required no great athletic skill, other than the ability to strike the ball against the wall or the curb, or to catch it when thrown, and to run like hell.

As we got older, we started playing touch football on the fields abutting the New Way near the Hudson. Touch football required that the ball carrier be touched with two hands. In the variant, "flag football," the runner wore a bandana tucked into the waistband of his trousers. The play was called dead when a "tackler" on the opposing team reached for the bandana and pulled it out. Soccer, now so popular, was unheard-of in our neighborhood. Where was the pleasure in simply kicking a ball from one end of the field to the other?

There is no account in these memoirs of a game-winning hit, a game-saving catch, or other such athletic achievement. As I lacked athletic ability and competitive ardor, team sports were an ordeal for me. The ordeal started even before the game began, at the "choosing-up-sides" ritual. As the other participants crowded around, the "captain" of one team tossed a bat to the other. When the other one caught it, the two boys took turns grabbing the bat, hand over hand, heading toward the flange at the bottom of the bat. Sometimes only the flange remained unexposed, but there was just enough wood showing to enable the "winner" to grab the bat with his fingertips. That earned for him the right to the first turn at picking teammates. I usually remained unchosen until the last, then joined the team which had not yet filled out its complement. The captain invariably assigned me to right field because that's where I'd be likely to cause the least harm: as most of the players were right-handed, they were likely to pull the ball toward left field, away from me. In general, the more organized the sport, the more athletic skill it demanded, the less often I played it and the less aptitude and enthusiasm I brought to it.

On the city streets, too, you were introduced to the seamier side of life. Not to heroin, cocaine, or even marijuana; as far as I know, none of the boys in our crowd did drugs in those days. No, the sins

I recall were of a more innocent type. My first exposure to pornography was the so-called “feelthy French peek-ture,” passed eagerly from hand to hand in the schoolyard. The photographs were grainy, underexposed and out-of-focus, so that you could hardly see what it was that was supposed to excite you.

Teddy Sternklar, a boy in the neighborhood, introduced me to another vice: gambling. Teddy was short, rotund and moon-faced, with reddish-brown hair and freckles and a wise-guy expression that made him look older than his years. One afternoon, he led me into the basement of his apartment house. To me these were forbidding places, with their gunmetal gray walls, their dim and garish lighting and the ever-present sound of the roaring furnace. You went to the basement to empty out your garbage or, after the war, to wash clothes in the coin-operated laundry machines, but you did not want to spend more time there than you absolutely had to. Nor did you want to socialize with the building superintendents and maintenance men. At an earlier age I had been frightened by stories of evil superintendents who threw little boys into the fiery furnace.

Even now, in my early teens, I was uneasy as I followed Teddy into the basement maintenance shop to join the building’s black maintenance man in a game of Twenty-One. Nails, screws, odd pieces of pipe and other such hardware were swept aside to clear a space on the workbench for the playing cards. Once they had been dealt out, the rule was that each extra card cost you a nickel. I learned the rules quickly, but, as a first-timer, I was unaware of the percentages of drawing to different hands. As a result, I went bust quickly, felt I had been played for a sucker, and never enjoyed playing cards for money after that.

Baseball as a spectator sport was a different story altogether. Maurice Koenigsberg, then Aunt Gabie’s husband, took me to my first baseball game in 1943, when I was nine. The New York Giants were playing the Chicago Cubs at the Giants’ home field, the Polo Grounds. This was many years before the New York Giants departed for San Francisco and the Polo Grounds was razed to make way for public housing. In those war years the top-notch players were in military service and only the second-raters with draft deferments played. Nevertheless, I was addicted from that time on. My team, though, was not the Giants but the New York Yankees. By 1943, Babe Ruth had retired and Lou Gehrig had passed away, and there were no “name” players on the roster. No matter, I

became a devoted follower, and knew the names of every player on the roster. Do any of these ring a bell? 1b Nick Etten, 2b George Stirnweiss, 3b Oscar Grimes ss Joe Buzas, lf Herschel Martin, cf Bud Metheny, rf Tuck Stainback, c Buddy Rosar. Probably not. They were the fill-ins during the war years, 1942-1945, and were quickly forgotten when the “regulars” took the field after returning from wartime service.

To Ben and me, a doubleheader at Yankee Stadium was the ideal way to spend a summer Sunday afternoon in the years immediately after the war. We would take the subway to 161st Street in the Bronx, joining the crowd as it thronged through the gates. Then we climbed up-up-up to emerge in the bright summer sunlight, choosing seats in the upper deck right behind home plate. If memory serves, the seats cost \$1.25, and for that you could see both ends of the doubleheader. The best memory: seeing Yogi Berra, in a game against the St. Louis Browns, make an unassisted double play. The batter tapped the ball in front of the plate; Yogi pounced on it, tagged the batter out and then tagged the runner trying to score from third base. For good measure, he tagged the home plate umpire, too. You could look it up.

We followed the Yankees avidly on the radio. The broadcasts of home games were “live,” with the announcer describing the events as they took place and the noises of the crowd heard in the background. Each local announcer had his patented expressions: Mel Allen, a native Alabaman who was for years the Yankees’ announcer, would accompany a home run ball with an exultant “Going. . . going . . . GONE!” Red Barber, another Southerner, was the voice of the Brooklyn Dodgers, who were later to decamp to Los Angeles. More soft-spoken and less emotional than Mel Allen, Barber would lace his descriptions with down-home expressions. When a batter was ahead of the pitcher in the count, Red would say that he was “sitting in the catbird seat”; when the Dodgers had the bases loaded, he would say the bases were “F.O.B.,” which in shipping lingo means that the purchaser pays the freight costs from place of shipment, but in this case meant “Full of Brooklyns.”

When a team went on the road to play its “away games,” the announcer did not accompany the team. Instead, he usually remained behind in the studio and re-created the games as he received the pitch-by-pitch report over the Western Union ticker.

You could tell that these were road game re-creations, not only by the sound of the ticker in the background, but because of the absence of crowd noise. The broadcaster could never summon up the excitement in his voice that you heard at the home game broadcasts. Sometimes, when the transmission got scrambled or there was a lull in the game, the announcer “winged it,” improvising what he guessed was happening on the field. The listeners were usually none the wiser for it. Red Barber was the master at these taped re-creations of away games.

My passion for baseball was so great that, in my teens, I diverted myself with a fantasy league of my own. Decades before that became a nationwide amusement, I created a league consisting of teams in smaller towns and cities in Pennsylvania and New York and spent long hours sitting with a yellow pad, creating home-and-away schedules for them, designing their caps and jackets and assigning major league players to each team.

While going to a ballgame was a now-and-then pleasure, the local movies were another thing entirely. Every kid loved the movies then, as they do today. And what a choice we had! Of course, there were the big movie palaces downtown on Broadway, Seventh Avenue and Times Square: the Radio City Music Hall, the Roxy and the Criterion. We seldom went downtown to those theatres.

Our preferred movie house was the Alpine Theatre, just a block from our apartment building on Dyckman Street. Today it's a McDonald's fast food restaurant. Less frequently, we would go to the Inwood, farther down Dyckman near Nagle Avenue, or to the Loew's 207th Street. At the Alpine, you could get an afternoon's entertainment for 25 cents. If you entered at about 1:00 pm, you arrived in time for the cartoons, the Fox-Movietone News of the World newsreels, the coming attractions, the serials, and then two full-length films. Children were confined to one side of the theatre, on the right as you faced the screen. A white-coated matron paced up and down the aisle, flashlight in hand, ready to eject any unruly kid. Those were wonderful afternoons! Whether the films were made by M-G-M or Warner Bros., with their readily recognizable stars, or by B-picture producers such as Republic and Monogram, made no difference to us. All we wanted was entertainment, and we could accept anything to get it.

When I finally emerged from the movie palace at around 5:00 pm, squinting to adjust my eyes to the late afternoon sunlight, and started on the way home, I was still in Hollywood, so to speak. I would be the actor whom I had just seen on screen, whether it was Humphrey Bogart talking out of the side of his mouth, the tight-lipped Gary Cooper, his responses consisting of "Yup" and "Nope," cold-hearted villains like Edward G. Robinson, George Raft and Jimmy Cagney, or the debonair types like George Sanders and Cary Grant. Would I, I wondered, ever have the savoir faire of a Walter Pidgeon, in his silk smoking jacket with the black moiré lapels, languidly stirring martinis at the sideboard while his elegantly-dressed guests mingled in the background?

Other boys my age had that same desire to come across like the Hollywood stars they admired. The columnist Richard Cohen has said:

*When I was a boy, I wanted very much to be an adult. I wanted, in fact, to be like Cary Grant. I wanted to dress like him, talk like him, deal with women like him, talk to headwaiters like him—in short, be the master of every situation.*<sup>131</sup>

The historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. in his autobiography had the same recollections and the same aspirations as I:

*We went to the movies for entertainment, of course . . . but almost as much for instruction in techniques of self-presentation. Young men sauntered insolently down the street like James Cagney, wisecracked like William Powell, cursed like Humphrey Bogart and wooed like Clark Gable. The style to which I vainly aspired was the witty, urbane, nonchalant, unruffled type—Powell, especially as [Dashiell] Hammett's Nick Charles, Fred Astaire, Robert Montgomery, Rex Harrison. What often came out instead was a snotty certainty, verbal aggression and deplorable manners.*<sup>132</sup>

I had my favorite actresses, too. They were not the ditzy blondes or the sultry types like Ava Gardner, Joan Crawford or Jane Russell. Instead, I was drawn to the ultra-sophisticated women with their delicate features who wore slinky couturier gowns and moved with a refined grace. At the same time, I had a weakness for wholesome girl-next-door types. High on my list were Olivia deHaviland, Merle Oberon, Lili Palmer and Ingrid Bergman. Elizabeth Taylor, just two years older than I, made me melt, seeing her and Montgomery Clift in "A Place in the Sun." I had minor crushes, too, for Audrey

Hepburn and Dana Wynter. An upper-class Continental accent always got to me.

When I returned to our apartment, still “high” from my afternoon at the movies, Mother had to listen as I gave her a detailed account of the film. Naturally, when I came back from a double bill, there were two movies to describe. She listened patiently, never rushing me along to the conclusion of what must have been an ordeal for her.

One of my first films was the 1942 *noir* classic, “This Gun for Hire,” with Alan Ladd and Veronica Lake. I don’t remember if I saw it with Mother; I would have been too young to see it alone. In any event, it was not a movie for a young child to see, alone or accompanied by an adult. The killer, played by Alan Ladd, rents a gun, climbs a flight of stairs and fires the rented weapon, killing a man and his wife. On his way down, he sees their daughter, a little girl, sitting on the lowest step. With a mixture of pity and contempt, the killer casually flips a bonbon at the newly-orphaned tot. The film ends with a police chase through the railroad yards, Ladd fleeing with the blond Veronica Lake in tow, until the police catch up with him and gun him down. Some movie for an eight-year-old!

There were other films, too, more appropriate but less memorable: “Meet Me in St. Louis,” with Margaret O’Brien, “Springtime in the Rockies,” “Babes on Broadway,” “Sergeant York,” “Boys Town” with Spencer Tracy, “The Fighting 69th” with Pat O’Brien, “Gentleman Jim” (Jim Corbett, the heavyweight boxer), and “National Velvet” with a very young Elizabeth Taylor in her first film role, “The Yearling” (an adaptation of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings book), “Romance of Ruby Ridge,” “Lost Weekend” and “The Lady in the Lake,” both with Ray Milland. You name it, if the film was made between 1942 and 1948, I probably saw it. These were in addition to the war movies that were a staple during that period.

I don’t mean to say that my moviegoing was indiscriminate. Mother subscribed to *Parents Magazine* during those years, which featured ratings of current films, indicating to parents those that were appropriate for their children. Mother consulted those ratings, and must have refused to allow me to see movies that the magazine did not approve of as suitable for children, but I don’t remember any instance of that.

My favorite activity as a child was reading. When I was not playing the street games that I have described earlier in this chapter, I was at home, lost in the world described in the book I was reading. Other children my age called me a bookworm, one who preferred the company of books to that of other children. Guilty as charged! That was a blunt but accurate description of me in those years.

I was not then aware of Sir Francis Bacon's epigram from his *Essays, Civil and Moral*: "*Reading maketh the full man.*" Had I known of it, and had it explained to me, I would have fully agreed, just as I would have agreed with Sir Richard Steele that "*Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body.*"<sup>133</sup>

What could be more engrossing than a good book, one that frees your imagination to work its magic about the people, places and events that the book describes? Books, said Steele,

*are the legacies that a great genius leaves to mankind, which are to be delivered from generation to generation, as presents to the posterity of those who are yet unborn.*<sup>134</sup>

And those words were written in 1742, when the printing press was but 250 years old. Think of the many marvelous books that were yet to be written, by authors as yet unborn!

For children with backgrounds different from mine, books themselves, never mind what was inside the covers, were a great revelation. Having been surrounded by books from infancy, that was not my experience. Books in great quantities lined the shelves of the bookcases in our apartment and that of my grandparents. I was read to almost daily by my parents and grandparents, and started reading books on my own as soon as I learned how. Some of those books were given to me as presents; some were already on Mother's shelves, others I obtained from the public library as soon as I was old enough to get my own card.

My lifelong love affair with books began as a five-year-old with *Along the Busy River* and *Sing Ling and Me Too*. Later, in my teens, if I wanted to read the latest best sellers, I had only to go across the street to the corner drug store. Amidst the trusses, lotions and ointments, the pharmacy had a small lending library, one of those four-sided bookcases that revolve on a central spindle. You could take out a current bestseller for 25 cents a day. A kid with a small

allowance could learn to read very fast if each additional day cost a quarter!

Summers, at camp, I gravitated to the bookcases in the main house the way other kids headed for the ballfield and the swimming pool. That's how I came to read *With Clive in India*, by G. A. Henty, a musty book with foxed pages that, even when I read it, more than sixty years ago, was already sixty years old. I was a fan of older books by Henty and others about war and adventure, less so of more-recent books written specifically for children like the Hardy Boys and the Tom Swift series.

It wasn't only the reading itself that I enjoyed, but equally so the browsing. Henry Ward Beecher had it right when he asked: "*Where is human nature so weak as in the bookstore?*"<sup>135</sup> In my early teens, my favorite downtown destination was Fourth Avenue, the southern extension of Park Avenue. In those days, the six-block stretch of Fourth Avenue from Astor Place to 14th Street was lined on both sides with used-book stores. These were dark, poorly lit places, the air musty from the dust collected on the books. Books filled the shelves, some of them shelved in front of other books, and, everywhere, piles of books not yet ready for shelving. The owners always seemed as seedy as the books that surrounded them. The book lover's challenge was to match wits with the owner, to buy for fifty cents or a dollar a book that was worth much more. Today no more than one or two of these old-time stores remain. Bibliophiles still enjoy outsmarting the bookstore owners to get a valuable book at a bargain-basement price, but, as these old-timers seem to know the value of their books, such triumphs are rare.

From the time I learned how to read through my high school years, I read constantly, not because I set out to be well-read but simply because, as a young boy and later in my teens, almost every book I encountered held its fascination for me. In later life, our interests become more specialized; we may feel an obligation to read up on our professional interests or in our avocation. In works of fiction, we might as adults gravitate toward suspense thrillers or works by a specific category of writer or, over a period of time, the works of just one writer. Not so in childhood, at least not in mine. As a boy, I simply enjoyed reading, and read omnivorously.

Early on, I read the German children's classics, *Max und Moritz*, by Wilhelm Busch, and *Struwwelpeter* by Heinrich Hoffmann, with their graphic depictions of the gruesome things that happen to little

boys who don't play by the rules or don't keep themselves well-groomed or watch where they're going.

Later, I read A. A. Milne's *Pooh* trilogy, *Winnie the Pooh*, *Now We Are Six* and *When We Were Young*, and Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*; *Robin Hood*; *The Kid from Tompkinsville* by John R. Tunis; *Dr. Doolittle and the Pushmi-Pullyu* by Hugh Loftus; and Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses*. Then I moved on to the children's classics, especially the brown-cover editions published by Scribner's with illustrations by N.C. Wyeth: *The Children of Dickens*; *The Scottish Chiefs* by Jane Porter; *Ivanhoe*, by Sir Walter Scott; and Jules Verne's *Mysterious Island* and *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. In my teens, I turned to Robert Graves's *Hercules*, *My Shipmate* and his other historical novels: *I, Claudius*, *Claudius the God* and *Count Belisarius*, and those of Frances Parkinson Keyes: *Came a Cavalier* and *Dinner at Antoine's*. Like other boys, I enjoyed reading travel and adventure books, such as Richard Henry Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast*, Jim Corbett's *Man-Eaters of Kumaon* and Richard Halliburton's *Book of Marvels*. Still more books come to mind: Paul de Kruif's *Microbe Hunters*; Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*; *Destry Rides Again* by Max Brand; C. S. Marryat's *Mr. Midshipman Easy*; Upton Sinclair's Lanny Budd series, where the eponymous hero was placed among actual historical personages and real events; the novels of that other Sinclair, Sinclair Lewis—*Dodsworth*, *Main Street*, and *Arrowsmith*; and Hans Bernd Gisevius's *To the Bitter End*, his narrative of the anti-Nazi resistance movement and of the failed plot to kill Hitler on July 20, 1944. It was clearly an eclectic assortment of books that held my interest in those years.

I also enjoyed browsing through encyclopedias, such as the Duden pictorial, a German encyclopedia, and compendia such as *A Thesaurus of Anecdotes*<sup>136</sup> and the English dictionary. In my fascination with language and in the pleasure I get from dictionary browsing, I am not alone:

*As sheer casual reading matter, I still find the English dictionary the most interesting book in our language.*<sup>137</sup>

Words, their meaning and their etymology, have been a lifelong fascination of mine. When I was only three, great-grandmother Clara Lewin noticed that I was "definitely interested in speaking, repeats words which are new to him and applies them, always correctly." I suppose I acquired this enthusiasm from my philologist

parents and from Grandfather. A special delight has been to find the few words in the dictionary whose etymology has been entered as “uncertain” or “unknown” because their origin has stumped even the most highly trained word-experts.

My reading wasn't limited to serious hardcover books. Like every other boy, I enjoyed the action comic books that we collected or passed from hand to hand, featuring Superman, Captain Marvel, Wonder Woman, Captain America, Plastic Man, the Human Torch and Batman and Robin (it never occurred to us to speculate on what those two did at Bruce Wayne's mansion at night after meting out justice to the bad guys). Those were the days when comic book artists and writers had complete license to draw and write as they wished, before the adoption of the Comic Book Code in 1954. The Code held no meaning for us; we were never interested in the extreme horror and sadism that spurred its adoption.

On the back of many comic books was a full page ad for the Charles Atlas Body-Building System, with its cartoon story of the 97-pound weakling, sitting with his girl on the beach when the big bully comes by and kicks sand on him. He resolves not to let that happen again, and enrolls in the Charles Atlas bodybuilding program. The next time that bully comes by and kicks sand at him, the erstwhile 97-pound weakling stands up and pops him! As a skinny kid, not athletic, I always identified with that 97-pound weakling. I struggled in those years to put on weight, sometimes drinking two coffee ice cream sodas, one after another, at Steve's, the neighborhood ice cream parlor. One of the blessings of maturity is that I am more comfortable in my body now than when, as a skinny beanpole, I saw myself as a 97-pound weakling.

We saved everything, threw out nothing: our comic books, our baseball and other trading cards, our collection of Dixie-Cup lids, our stamp collection. Along the way from childhood to adulthood, however, all these things disappeared. Among them were our beautiful Märklin toy trains, brought over from Germany; the stamp collection that Ben and I maintained, from which we learned so much about the world and its geography; the rich burgundy velvet vest with the raised gold-thread embroidered frogs and the red fez with the black tassel, both of which Grandfather had brought back to Germany from Egypt; and the little book of Persian miniatures, telling the story of the Emperor Khai Khosru. By the time I reached adulthood, all these treasures had vanished.

Evidently, I was not the only child of my day who had no say in deciding whether these things, so precious to him, were to be kept or disposed of. Philip Roth recalled of his boyhood in Newark that

*[i]t was only after I had searched thoroughly, but in vain, through the cartons I'd stored them in that my mother reluctantly—and not until we were off alone together—explained how they [his boyhood stamp collection] had come to disappear. She assured me that she had tried to stop [his father], that she had told him the stamps weren't his to dispose of, but he wouldn't listen. He told her that I was grown up, away at college, didn't 'use the stamps anymore, whereas Chickie, his great nephew, could bring them with him to school,' et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.<sup>138</sup>*

Those items, had they been saved, would have been treasured links to our childhood, even if they had no monetary value.

Toddlers today are weaned on Barney and Sesame Street. As they get older, they watch the sitcoms on television until the adult viewing portion of the scheduling begins at 9:00 pm. Back in the 1940's, it was radio that educated, enlightened and entertained Americans. Just as today's children head straight for the television, if their parents let them, and sit mesmerized by the offerings of Nickelodeon and the Cartoon Network, so, at 4:30 each afternoon, Ben and I would be stretched out on our beds, listening for the next hour and a half to the boys' action and adventure serials, until Mother called us into the kitchen for supper. (Women listeners had their daytime serials, forerunners of today's "General Hospital" and the like, but, if memory serves correctly, there were no afternoon serial programs specifically aimed at girls our age). Depending on what radio station you turned to, whether the NBC affiliate, WEAf, or the ABC station, WJZ, you might hear "The Inner Sanctum" (the spooky voice intoning, "This is Raymond, your host"), followed by "The Lone Ranger," "The Shadow" ("Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The Shadow knows!") and "The Green Hornet." At 5:00 it was time for "Hop Harrigan," "Dick Tracy," and "Captain Midnight" ("Kids, to get your magic Captain Midnight decoder ring, send twenty-five cents and a Post Toasties box top to . . ."). At 5:45 came cowboy Tom Mix (to the tune of "When It's Round-Up Time in Texas": "Shredded Ralston for your breakfast . . ."). As soon as dinner was over, we put our ears to the radio again for more crime-and-suspense programs: "Nick Carter, Master Detective," "Inspector Keen, Tracer of Lost

Persons” (wags called it “Inspector Trace, Keener than Most Persons”) and another inspector, “Hearthstone of the Death Squad,” “Bulldog Drummond,” “Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar,” “This is Your FBI,” and “The FBI in Peace and War.”

On Sunday nights, America was glued to the radio console, just as, a few years later, it would gather around the television set. The programming on Sunday evening started with the Jack Benny Hour at 7:00, followed by Fred Allen at 7:30, the Phil Harris Show at 8 o’clock, and Your Hit Parade at 8:30. Again and again, one would hear people say that the regulars on these shows were “just like family.” I’m glad that I grew up at the tail end of the radio era, when we could let our imaginations run free as we listened, each boy’s mental picture of the action different and each equally “true.”

I once attended the live studio presentation of a Western action drama sponsored by the then well-known cleanser, Twenty-Mule Team Borax.. The actors and actresses were dressed in well-tailored coats, suits and dresses and not in the Levis, Stetsons and gingham dresses that those at home pictured them wearing. With their scripts held in front of them, they clustered around the single microphone, leaning into it as their turn came to read their lines. Meanwhile, off to one side, the sound effects man moved at breakneck speed to reproduce the clippety-clop of horses’ hooves, doors creaking open, the rain pounding against the windows and the wind howling. He was one busy guy! Knowing how those sounds were made didn’t destroy my ability to picture in my mind’s eye the approaching storm and hear the wind roar down the desert canyon.

As I entered my teens, I came to enjoy popular music. Even without television, popular music was everywhere—on records and on sheet music, at the shows and in the movie musicals. In the years since then, hardly a day has gone by when I don’t have a song on my lips, humming it, singing it, or hearing it in my head, just as, years later, the Beatles sang it: “Penny Lane is in my ears and in my heart.”

I was always a big-time whistler, still am. As usual, Rodgers and Hammerstein had it right:

*Whenever I feel afraid, I hold my head erect  
And whistle a happy tune, so no will suspect  
I’m afraid . . .*<sup>139</sup>

When that song was written, people whistled much more often than they do now. Perhaps it is no longer considered “cool” to do that in public. A Washington *Post* writer has described how he learned from his father the stress-reducing benefits of whistling:

. . . He [the writer’s father] *never got too down to whistle, something I loved about him. Maybe whistling just made him feel better. In turn, watching him whistle taught me something important: No matter what your state of mind, or your circumstance in life, find a way to create some happiness. Even if it’s just a smidgen.*<sup>140</sup>

That’s why I whistled—who can feel “down” while whistling an upbeat song? I could whistle loud, through pursed lips, or very quietly, through the gap between my front teeth, so quietly and with such a normal set of my lips that those who heard it could scarcely tell where the sound was coming from.

Then, too, there was music for dancing. In high school, we danced the rhumba to “The Peanut Vendor” and the Lindy hop to “Near You.” For slow dancing with the lights down low there was “It Had to Be You,” “Embraceable You,” “I Couldn’t Sleep A Wink Last Night,” “I Had the Craziest Dream,” the hit songs by the foreign *chanteurs et chanteuses*, Edith Piaf’s “La Vie en Rose” and Charles Trenet’s “La Mer,” and countless others.

Living in New York in the 40’s and 50’s was great for a teenager. Just as today’s kids “surf the channels” on TV or “surf the ‘Net,” I surfed the radio dial. From the far left to the far right, you could hear, somewhere on the radio dial, music in any language, of every type. I heard them all, and was drawn to most of them. At the far left end of the dial, you could overhear ship-to-shore phone conversations, romantic exchanges between sailors too long at sea and their wives and sweethearts, as the ship neared port.

It was through such dial-twirling that I encountered WHN and its Irish Hour, sponsored by the Flying Irishman travel agency:

*Sure and if it’s a trip for business or fun  
Then call the Smiling Irishman  
You can’t stay home with fares so low  
Call Chickering 4-3800.*

On that program I heard and learned by heart the familiar songs of Ireland: “The Rose of Tralee,” “Danny Boy,” and others.

The late 40's and early 50's were also the heyday of country and western music; we called it "hillbilly" music. On that same station, WHN, I was introduced to the great singers of that era, now enshrined in the Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville: Hank Williams, Red Foley, Ernest Tubbs, Roy Acuff and Eddie Arnold. Two "girl singers" were also represented in the top ranks: Kitty Wells and Patsy Cline. Many people cannot understand the attraction of that music, calling it hokey and cornball, but I am one of the millions (go visit Branson in the Ozarks, the Grand Ol' Opry in Nashville and Dollywood in Gatlinburg, Tennessee) who are addicted to the "high lonesome" sound, those wailing and twanging melodies and lyrics that speak of the depths and heights of human experience, of the woes of liquor, of honky-tonk girls and guys, of findin' love and losin' it, of cheatin' and payin' the price.

Having first found country music on recordings via WHN, I also found that late at night you could pick up the concerts live via the Gran' Ol' Opry on WSM, AM 650 out of Nashville, a clear-channel frequency, and the Saturday Night Jamboree out of Wheeling, West Virginia's WWVA, 1170 on the AM dial. That station's 50,000 watts of clear channel reached clear across the Atlantic to England and made country music fans out of its many listeners there.

My all-around favorite singer was the self-styled King of the Honky-Tonks, Lefty Frizzell. I was entranced by his swooping legatos and trills, sung in his East Texas nasal twang. Lefty had a string of hits in the late 40's and early 50's, among them "Always Late (With Your Kisses)," "The Mom and Dad Waltz" and "If You Got the Money (I Got the Time)." I knew those songs and sang them often, but my favorite was on the B-side of one of those hits:

*I lose my blu-u-u-u-ues  
Only when I'm wi-ith you-ou-ou  
No one else can do-oo-oo  
You're in my heart to sta-ay.  
But when you're go-o-one,  
And I'm all alo-o-one  
I'll be singing this so-o-o-ong  
I want to be with you-ou always.<sup>141</sup>*

I sang and hummed and whistled that song so often around the house that Mother learned it, too. She used to kid me by singing the last two lines. Lefty died prematurely, leaving behind countless fans

around the world who keep his memory alive with an Internet website even today.<sup>142</sup>

I was not the only Jewish kid who got hooked early on country and western music. One of them even organized and led his own bluegrass band. Kinky (né Richard) Friedman and his Texas Jewboys developed a modest reputation among the country music cognoscenti, although they never achieved the fame of the Texas Troubadours, the Country Gentlemen, and the Sons of the Pioneers. Kinky gave up country music several years ago for a run at politics and mystery-book writing,<sup>143</sup> but the band's recordings are still available today. Sad to say, Kinky "pulled up the roots," to use the Talmudic term for apostasy. One of his more recent songs is entitled, "They Don't Make Jews Like Jesus Anymore."<sup>144</sup>

Another category of song that has given me pleasure to hear and to sing to myself are the gospel songs and hymns from a time when America's rural heritage predominated. These old-time songs speak to me of certainty and truth, although their truth is not mine. It no longer troubles me, as it did when I was young, that they are laced with references to Jesus, to the Savior, and to the Blood of the Lamb; I sing them anyway. So, when I was working, my colleagues, much to their amusement, heard me hum or whistle "The Old Rugged Cross," "Just a Closer Walk with Thee," "Peace in the Valley," and "Life's Railway to Heaven," all songs I first heard years ago on old 78 rpm records and have never forgotten.

If a teenager was looking for live music performed by the all-time greats, New York in the 1940's and 50's was the place to be. It was the golden age of the juke joints, the high-class lounges and the smoke-filled jazz bars, where the minimum age for purchasing liquor was 18 but, if you climbed onto a barstool, you got a glass of beer or a shot of hard liquor with no questions asked.

The jazz bars were everywhere, but especially on 52d Street between Fifth Avenue and Sixth. Within that one block, you could check out jazz from Dixieland to bebop, at the Famous Door, Tony Pastor's, the Three Deuces, the Two O'Clock Club, the Embers and Jimmy Ryan's. At one time or another, all the great jazz musicians played at these clubs: Lester (Prez) Young, Dizzy Gillespie, Errol Garner, Art Tatum, Charlie (Bird) Parker, Miles Davis. I have a dim recollection (it must have been from 1950-1951) of standing at the Three Deuces bar, nursing the one bottle of Ballantine's beer that would last me until the end of the set and

watching Errol Garner at the keyboard at the far end of the room, a cigarette dangling from his mouth, a half-full whiskey-glass on the piano.

With some of my high-school classmates, I also went to the Copacabana on the West Side to see and hear the blind British pianist, George Shearing. Adopting the custom of other sightless musicians, he wore glasses tinted dark-blue. We sat in the cheaper seats at the back of the room and listened while Shearing, accompanied by his sidemen, played “September Song,” “Tenderly” and “Lullaby of Birdland.” In the early 50’s, Shearing, playing solo or with a trio, had one hit record after another. He was a favorite of café society as well for his cool bop sounds, his stiff-fingered chords and novel chord progressions.

Songs from another era were the draw at another favorite spot, the Metropole Café & Bar at Seventh Avenue and 48th Street (Times Square). The Metropole was a long narrow room, with a bar extending its full length, perpendicular to the street. Behind the bar was a runway and, on the wall behind the runway, rose-tinted mirrors. The entertainers, women well past their prime, pranced, minced and strutted comically back and forth on that runway, seductively twirling their seed-pearl handbags. They wore black fishnet stockings, short flaring skirts, bustieres and elbow-length gloves and were heavily made up in rouge, mascara and false eyelashes. With the customers joining in raucously, the women would sing standards of earlier decades such as “East Side, West Side,” “Sweet Rosie O’Grady” and “It’s a Long Way to Tipperary.” Later in the evening the songs got rauchier, to the whoops and hollers of the mostly-male patrons. The women entertainers did not turn me on, but I enjoyed the singing, the bonhomie that prevailed among the customers and the bawdy banter between singers and customers.

As you get older, you get to be more of a stay-at-home. Television and, more recently, the computer, have done that to all of us. The high cost of live entertainment is a strong deterrent. “Getting there” is certainly not “half the fun,” as a television airline commercial once claimed. With the passing years you also become more selective and more grudging of your time. As a result, I do not routinely rush to see the latest blockbuster hit on the weekend that it opens. When I do go to the movies, I am part of that effete intellectual coterie, a miniscule fraction of the total moviegoing

public, that enjoys foreign and independent films more than the Hollywood product. I find that these films, which are small in focus, concentrating on the lives of just a handful of people, convey the human emotions more honestly than Hollywood does. My bar-hopping days are also over. But memories of nights on 52d Street and Saturday afternoons at the Alpine Theatre still warm my soul.

Today, reading a book or listening to it in the car on a compact disc is one of life's great pleasures and reading about new books in the weekend book reviews of the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* is a favorite pastime. Here, as in so many other ways, Mother was an inspiration: stretched out on her bed, a specially-designed orthopedic pillow under her back and shoulders, she was always reading. She kept on reading almost until her last breath. When she died on December 8, 1991, she had on her night-table, a bookmark at the page she had reached, the then popular nonfiction work, Deborah Tannen's *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*.<sup>145</sup> To be reading an instructive book when you die: now that is truly "lifetime learning."

## **HOT SUMMER DAYS, HUMID SUMMER NIGHTS**

**W**hen I was a child, summer vacations were not a time for travel to exotic places abroad or to remote destinations within the U.S. Many families, and most New Yorkers, had no cars; they traveled by inter-city buses or by train. With the war on, those who had cars found their travel limited by gas rationing. The road network was still primitive; there was as yet no interstate highway system, no beltways. Travel from city to city by car meant taking US-1 and US-40 and all their counterparts around the country from city to city, through the heart of all the cities in between. Civilian air travel was not the commonplace that it is today.

Nor could paid vacations be taken for granted as a universally accepted benefit. Most workers were fortunate to get two weeks' vacation a year, paid or unpaid. Blue-collar workers followed the dictates of the plant management in planning their vacations; they took their vacations when the plant was shut down. For those with office jobs, a week of vacation in late December left only one week during the summer. Finally, many of the exclusive mountain resorts in the Adirondacks and the White Mountains were off-limits to Jews. One mountain resort advertised that alcohol, persons with tuberculosis, and "Hebrews" were not allowed on the premises and that was not atypical, as my father had found during his short "scouting-out" visit to America. Most Jewish families were not personally affected by these restrictions because they could not afford to stay in such places.

The popular alternatives for the Jewish masses were "da mountains"—the Catskills or the Poconos—or "da shore"—the Long Island and New Jersey beaches. While the father continued to work in the sweltering city, he sent his wife and small children up to the mountains, to tiny apartments called *koch-alleins* ("cook-alones") in bungalow colonies owned in most cases by immigrant Jewish families barely one rung up on the ladder from their clientele. There the family would socialize with other wives and children, the fathers coming up on weekends and then for the week or two that they could take off from work. Single people and couples with more money went to the Catskill resorts, to Brown's, Kutscher's, Grossinger's and others. These had been developed in the 1920's as an alternative to the established hotels and resorts that often discriminated against Jews. Few of these grand hotels still stand today. Some burned down, falling victim, perhaps, to what was slyly referred to as "Jewish lightning." It would happen like this: when the useful economic life of a hotel had ended, it slid into decrepitude. Then, one night during the off-season when its rooms were unoccupied, the hotel was destroyed by fire. Everyone agreed that it was an "accident," that lightning—"Jewish lightning"—had struck and set the building ablaze. The owners, after dutifully expressing their regrets that an era had ended, collected on the fire insurance policy. Other such hotels have been demolished, the property redeveloped as condominiums and ski resorts. Now, too, the legal bars have come down on the admission of Jews to the bon ton resorts. With the passage of federal and state laws against discrimination in public accommodations and changing attitudes, the management is, or ought to be, indifferent whether the arriving guest is a Goldberg or a Lowell.

The German Jewish intelligentsia favored neither the *koch-alleins* nor the big Borscht Belt resorts. They were drawn to places and activities similar to those they had known in childhood in Germany: inns that advertised wholesome food, a well-stocked library, an extensive record collection, hiking in the pine forests and swimming in mountain lakes, and promising the company of others having the

same mother tongue and the same world-outlook. That's how it was for my parents, too. In 1938, her first full summer in America, Mother went away to Waterman Farm in the Catskills, taking me along. Father was left to swelter in the City with Benjamin, but managed on two weekends during the summer to join Mother and me at the farm.

For older German-Jewish children, as for other Jewish school-age children, the end of the school year in June meant the start, sometimes only two or three days later, of the summer camp season. If parents were not sending their children back to the same camp they had gone to the previous year, they would have begun the process of camp selection months earlier, even in the previous fall, scanning the summer camp advertising section of the *New York Times* Sunday magazine to get the right camp for their little ones. Once the camp had been decided upon and an application had been submitted, there would be an interview in New York City with the camp director. For Mother, it had to be a Jewish camp, but not too *frum* (pious). The phrase, "Dietary laws observed," could mean anything from *glatt kosher* to no bacon for breakfast, no ham for Sunday dinner. Most of the camps I was sent to as a small boy were owned by German Jews. Mother would have learned of them by word-of-mouth or perhaps through an ad in the *Aufbau* ("Reconstruction"), the newspaper published in New York for German-Jewish refugees. Because of the family's fragile financial condition, the camps also had to offer Mother a steep discount from the standard camp fees.

With the camp picked out and the deposit mailed in, the serious preparations began. Sometime in March or April, the camp would send out a manila envelope full of instructions, including a clothing list: six pairs of underwear, ten polo shirts (that's what we called T-shirts), rainwear, swim trunks, and so on. List in hand, Mother and I took the subway to the No. 1 camp outfitter in Manhattan, Rappaport's, at 87th Street and Columbus Avenue. When we arrived at the store, it would be crowded with dozens of other Mommas and their sons and daughters, all checking their purchases against their camp's clothing list. Once the family returned home with the new summer clothes, each piece had to be labeled so it wouldn't be lost in the camp laundry. Early on, the labels were individually sewn into each garment. Later, with the invention of the iron-on label, the task was much less arduous. The next step

was to pack the clothes into the footlocker, along with the pre-addressed postcards and whatever else you just couldn't do without. That might be a musical instrument, a well-worked-in baseball glove, or a canister of tennis balls. No musical instruments, no sports equipment, took up space in my footlocker. Other than the clothes, towels and other necessities, Mother packed my trunk only with stationery and pens or pencils to make sure that I wrote home often.

Camp departure in late June was a ritual, faithfully reported each year in the *Times*. On the scheduled departure day, Mother, Ben and I, along with hundreds of other children, headed for Grand Central Station, the railroad gateway to New England and the Catskills. In the terminal, counselors from each of the camps held up placards identifying their camps, a melee of campers, counselors and parents around each sign. After finding the placard with my camp's name on it, we headed down to the platform for the train from New York to Albany on the Delaware & Hudson line. There would be a final hug from Mother, promises to write frequently, and then it was time to get onto the train, to hear the conductor's "All aboard!" and the whistle signaling that the journey was underway.

For me, the departure for camp was not a time of elation, an excited look ahead to the next eight weeks. Having spent summers away at camp from the age of six on, I accepted it as the proper way to spend the summer, not to be enjoyed or endured, but simply to be experienced. Nor had I any say in the choice of a camp. I never questioned Mother's selection of a camp for me, and I certainly never asked why we were being sent to camp at all. That was her decision, and I obeyed it. Only years later did it occur to me that our camp stays, Ben's and mine, were as much a respite for Mother from her children as they were a holiday for us.

I spent the summer of 1941, my second summer away at camp, at Camp Winnetou, in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania. Winnetou was owned by Egon Stadelmann, a tall, darkly handsome man then in his mid-30's, a refugee from Nazism like the rest of us. After the war he joined the Voice of America, starting as an announcer on its German-language broadcasting staff and going on to become one of its highest-ranking officials. Then, for 38 years after that, he was first a reporter and then editor-in-chief of the *Staatszeitung*, a New York German-language newspaper. Via the

Internet, I sent him greetings on his 90th birthday (he has since passed away).

Camp Winnetou was named after a fictitious Apache chief, the central character in the dime novels of Karl May (1842-1912). May was a German writer from whose pen poured a prodigious number of novels of the American West. He is the best-selling German author of all time, far more popular than Goethe, Herman Hesse or Thomas Mann. Call him a German Louis L'Amour or Zane Grey, if you will. What made May's books unusual was that the closest he had come to the plains and deserts he wrote about was Buffalo, New York. These western settings and the cowboys, ranchers and outlaws who peopled them were entirely the product of his imagination. Still, his novels were hugely popular with his German readers, who had never been in those places either and were therefore free to imagine them along with the author.

Albert Einstein was among the many men who remembered Karl May's novels as their favorite boyhood books, but May's most famous, or notorious, reader was *Der Fuehrer*, Adolf Hitler. Imagine the irony: almost all of Camp Winnetou's counselors and campers were German Jews, children of families that had only within the last six years escaped from Hitlerism and arrived in America.

Unlike the other camps I attended, Camp Winnetou was Jewishly observant, with the *Tischgebet* (grace after meals) after lunch and dinner and *Kiddush* on Friday nights. I remember it as a very warm, caring environment, like a day care center in the woods, without the excesses of competition that marked the American camps I was to attend in later years.

Quite the opposite was my camp experience the following year, 1942, at Children's Colony. The camp was located in Harrison, New York, in Westchester County, in a boarding school operated by the Kohuts. As I have said, I had no high expectations of any of the camps that I attended, but Children's Colony was traumatic for this eight-year-old. At night, campfires were held in the woods behind the school building, right at the edge of the Merritt Parkway. With the headlights from the cars passing just a short distance away, we would sit in the darkness around the smoldering embers, the tall trees looming in the blackness over us, while the counselors told "ghost stories." What an exciting time for the campers! Not for me; I was terrified. Halfway through the eight-week period, I called my mother and begged to be brought home.

Mother was probably less than pleased that she now had to include her older son in her summer plans. She was about to set out for Windham Farm, in the Catskills, and now, having extracted me from Children's Colony, she had to bring me along. Windham Farm was a working spread that took in lodgers during the summer, the type of farm-resort that catered to German-Jewish intellectuals. I had my first taste there of unpasteurized milk, straight from the udder, so to speak, and enjoyed the remarkably fresh taste that few city dwellers have experienced. I was entirely unaware of the risks in drinking unpasteurized milk—bovine tuberculosis, brucellosis, and other infections. Fortunately, these were healthy cows. After drinking that first glass of unpasteurized milk, I couldn't get enough of it.

The daily round of chores on the farm continued in the presence of the guests. One day the farmer called out to me, "Come on along with me, young fella," and I trotted behind him into the henhouse. Selecting one of the plumper hens, he grabbed it by the throat, the hen squawking and flapping its wings in terror, trying desperately to free itself from the farmer's grasp. Then the farmer moved quickly to the execution block, a nearby tree stump. Holding the hen's throat down with the left hand, he brought the hatchet down with his right hand, severing the head with one stroke. Thrown down from the stump, the headless hen careened in ever-tightening circles, then fell dead. Horrified as I was by what I had seen, I still accepted with relish the chicken dish that was offered for dinner that night.

A poultry execution witnessed in childhood seems to have been etched in many young minds. Larry McMurtry, the West Texas novelist, recalled that

*[T]he lives of pullets especially were subject to abrupt termination. I was a cheerful witness to many summary executions, most of them performed by my grandmother with her hatchet. If lunchtime approached, and she couldn't find her hatchet, she would simply whirl the chicken around a few times and pop off its head.*<sup>146</sup>

Windham Farm was also the setting for another scary episode that remains vivid in my memory. The site: the farm pond, behind the barn. Mother and other guests had brought their canvas folding chairs down to the pond's edge. While they sat there and talked, I waded in the shallow water at the margin of the pond. Suddenly,

the ground gave way beneath my feet, as the pond bottom sloped off sharply. Unable to swim, I began bobbing up and down, with no footing beneath me. As I was about to go under, I cried out to Mother. She leaped out of her seat, jumped into the pond and grabbed me under my armpits, pulling me out of the water. Perhaps my fear of the water, which took years to overcome, began on that day.

A year later, it was 1943, in the middle of the war, and I was nine years old. That summer, I was sent to Camp Petersville, a camp run out of her home by the owner, Mrs. Peterson, in Norwichtown, Connecticut. I have no memories of softball games, volleyball, swimming or any of the activities that come to mind for other children when they think back to their camp days. No, what I remember were the movies that we saw that summer in downtown Norwich. "Destroyer" was a tribute to the men of the surface navy, produced with the cooperation of the U.S. Navy, as were so many wartime films. Another film seen that summer, an early Esther Williams aquatic spectacular, needed no help from the U.S. Navy. Dressed in a series of swimsuits that fetchingly displayed her hourglass figure, the actress spent ninety minutes in the water, leading a bevy of beauties in intricate aquatic production numbers.

At Camp Petersville, too, I was caught up in my first "crush." Susan was a pretty little blue-eyed blonde my age, her hair cut in the page-boy bob then in vogue for pre-pubertal girls. For weeks, I followed Susan around like a sick puppy. Another boy, Douglas, also had his eye on her. My pining for Susan drew the attention of my counselor, who volunteered to intercede on my behalf, playing John Alden to my Myles Standish, so to speak. Alas, Susan made it clear to the counselor that she preferred Douglas, and so, for the first time but not the last, my love went unrequited.

I spent the next three summers, 1944 through 1946, at Camp Paradise, in the village of Fleischmanns, New York. Named for Charles Fleischmann, owner of the yeast company that bears his name, Fleischmanns is a small town in Delaware County, one of a series of hamlets strung along Route 28 as it winds its way northwesterly from Kingston on the Hudson River through the Catskill Mountains to the headwaters of the Delaware River. It was a one-traffic-light town with a couple of blocks of stores, a village hall and police station, two or three churches, retail establishments, a movie theatre and the Ulster & Delaware Railroad train station.

When I went to Camp Paradise in the 1940's, Route 28 was a meandering two-lane road linking one village to the next. Like other such roads, Route 28 began as an old Indian trail. Later it became a plank road, so-called because planks were laid down to keep wagons and coaches from sinking in the mud. Eventually it was paved over and became Route 28. Today, Route 28 is a four-lane highway bypassing Fleischmanns. You can easily speed on by the village without even noticing it. But, if you look for it, a sign on the highway announces the village. To get there, you turn off at the next exit; the town sits perhaps 300 yards from the exit ramp.

Camp Paradise was owned by a German Jewish woman, Ilse Shiftan. I met her first in her New York apartment, when Mother and I went there for the pre-camp interview. With her Medusa-like black hair and beady blue eyes, her skin yellowed by exposure to cigarette smoke, she did not project, even to this ten-year-old, that wholesome look that one associates with camp life and the great outdoors. I would find out soon enough that the name she had chosen for her camp, "Camp Paradise," was a gross misnomer. "Camp Inferno" would have been more appropriate.

Camp Paradise offered the gamut of traditional activities, softball, volleyball and swimming; my interest in these ranged from indifference to hatred. Two other activities did draw me in. The first of these was the "model city" with which Mrs. Shiftan was obsessed. This was a piece of land, perhaps twenty feet square, on which we were to build the City Beautiful. My interest in Shiftan City was no doubt a precursor of my later career interest in urban redevelopment.. The other activity which I enjoyed was dramatics on the social hall stage. We spent the first weeks of the summer rehearsing a production of Prokofiev's "Peter and the Wolf."

Parents Weekend was scheduled to be held midway through the summer. I looked forward to that weekend, to seeing Mother again and to showing off my "achievements." She was put up in a cottage on the camp grounds, which might have been the original farmhouse on the property. As soon as she was settled in her room, I led her to the City Beautiful, which was no more than a grassy plot with a few bricks, denoting buildings, and wooden dowels representing lampposts and telephone poles. Mother dutifully expressed her admiration for our accomplishments. That evening, "Peter and the Wolf" was produced in the camp's social hall for the assembled campers and their parents. In the role of the Grand-

father, I creaked across the stage, one hand on a short cane, the other on my hip, in the time-honored caricature of an old man, all to the oboe motif. I reveled in my success as a performer and in the attention I received backstage afterwards. No modest actor I!

Occasionally, on weekends, we campers lined up in a troop and marched about a mile down the hill into the town. Then we would head for that one movie theatre and enjoy the afternoon show and an ice cream cone before climbing back up the hill again. There were other hot and windless afternoons when we would hike toward the next little hamlet, Arkville. We walked single file at the edge of the roadway, the drainage ditch close by on the other side, the open fields beyond. To be away from the restrictions of camp life, whether in a movie theatre, hiking on a mountain path or on the open road, or picking wild blackberries at the edge of the woods, these were the highlights of the summer camp experience for me.

During one of my three summers at Camp Paradise, Mrs. Shiftan decided that there was too much swearing among the campers, and she would put a stop to it. At morning assembly, the campers formed a large circle around the flagpole and recited the Pledge of Allegiance as the American flag was hoisted on its crude white pole. Next came the announcements for the day, and then those campers who during the previous day had been caught using the words on the “swear list” were given a bar of Ivory Soap, passed from one miscreant to the other, and required to take a bite out of it. How many people have chewed a mouthful of soap, not merely tasting accidentally the occasional foam that might land on the lips while showering or shaving? I did, and often, for using words like “bastard” and “bitch.” For those minor sins, I paid the consequences: to take a bite out of the Ivory Soap bar. The taste of soap on the tongue was bad enough. Worse was the humiliation of being singled out as a “lawbreaker” and of being the unwanted focus of attention from the other campers and the counselors. Did it inhibit me in my use of those words? Probably, at least while counselors were in the vicinity. Did it cure me of the swearing habit? Certainly not. In a few years I would be using words that were not even on Mrs. Shiftan’s list.

It might have been that same summer that my life at Camp Paradise was made miserable by Peter, a little bully from Schenectady who was assigned to the same cabin. He was a short

stocky boy with freckles, a crewcut haircut and a manic glint in his eyes, not unlike the devilish expressions on the faces of Max and Moritz in the Wilhelm Busch book of that name. Peter delighted in short-sheeting the beds of his victims or in urinating on their bedsheets. I was one of his victims. The cabin counselor was indifferent to my pleas for justice. When I could no longer put up with Peter's bullying, I jumped him, pulled him down to the cabin floor, and caught him in a chokehold, his neck in the V formed by my upper arm and forearm. I was tightening my hold on him when, fortunately for him and for me, we were pulled apart. In punishment, I was "banished" to another cabin, a great relief to me. My tormentor suffered no penalty. My memory of Peter's constant needling and jokes at my expense gives a personal resonance to the present debate over bullying in the schools and what should be done about it. I can understand from my own experience what drives victims of bullying to go "over the top" and lash out, as I did, at their tormentors.

My travails in the cabin and all other aggravations receded to the back of my mind when the summer ended. The evening before our departure was marked by the traditional "final banquet," sometimes with a printed menu placed at our plates. For that dinner, the cooks at Camp Paradise, as at camps elsewhere, tried to outdo themselves and perhaps use up what remained of the food budget. Usually, the featured item on the menu was turkey or roast beef, along with mashed potatoes, cranberries and vegetables, and apple pie with ice cream for dessert. Sort of like Thanksgiving dinner, three months early. Often the counselors would provide after-dinner entertainment with songs written for the occasion.

The next morning, with the beds stripped and the footlockers packed and stacked in front of the cabins, we were loaded onto buses and taken to the Ulster & Delaware train station. Other campers might regret the end of their vacation and anticipate with dread the opening of school a few days later; not I. For me the high point of the summer came at that moment on the train, homebound, when, with the luggage stowed overhead and the campers in their seats, I felt that first tentative tug forward that told me that, yes indeed, my eight weeks at camp were over and I was on my way home.

When the train pulled into Grand Central Station and we emerged from the lower level onto the concourse, Mother was

there waiting for me. We took the subway back home, I plunged into the bathtub to scrub off eight weeks of grime, and then enjoyed my first home-cooked meal in two months. For the rest of that day and in the days following, Mother endured my detailed narrative of the highlights of my camp experience.

In 1947, Mother obtained a post as head counselor at Pioneer Youth Camp in Rifton, New York, outside of Kingston in the Catskills. Probably as part of her compensation, she was able to enroll me as a camper. The camp was operated by Pioneer Youth of America, Inc., a “progressive” organization with a strong commitment to serving youngsters of all races and backgrounds, regardless of ability to pay. It was my first contact with Negro and Puerto Rican boys and girls, there being none in my classes in public school. Awed by their grace and easy athleticism, I ogled these boys as if they were arrivals from another planet. Watching a Puerto Rican boy, my age, pitching in a softball game, I was mesmerized by his wind-up, his right arm whirling like a windmill, gathering momentum. Then the arm came down, the wrist snapped, and the ball spun toward the batter at speeds I had never thought possible. As for the black and Hispanic girls, I ogled them too, but not for their athletic ability.

From those kids, with lives so different from mine, I learned for the first time the music with the thumping backbeat that was to sweep the nation when it took hold among white kids seven years later:

*You left, ba-ba-ba-lay, without words, ba-ba-ba-lay  
Your heart, ba-ba-ba-lay, was unturned, ba-ba-ba-lay  
You said, ba-ba-ba-lay, you'd be true, ba-ba-ba-lay  
But dear I still love you, ba-ba-ba-lay.  
It's too ba-a-a-ad, that though the skies are so gra-ay  
Believe me I'm happy to sa-ay, it was a thrill of roma-a-a-ance.*

From the start, Mother hated her job at Pioneer Youth Camp. One of her particularly unpleasant tasks, she later told me, was to make the rounds of the girls' cabins after dark, just before bedtime, for “security.” Often, her flashlight's beam would find boys hiding under the bunkbeds. She would be forced to roust them out, interrupting an evening of pleasure, perhaps, for both the boys and the girls whom they were visiting.

Halfway through that summer, Mother providentially tripped on a woodland path and broke her ankle. This landed her in Kingston Hospital and put an end to her duties as head counselor at Pioneer Youth Camp. Visiting her at the hospital, I found her lying with one leg raised amid the fresh clean bed linens, surrounded by newspapers and flowers. I thought to myself, how fortunate for you; you longed for deliverance, and now you have attained it! Had I confronted her, she would have stoutly denied that this ankle break was anything other than an unfortunate accident, but I was convinced it was otherwise.

The following summer, 1948, still a different camp: Camp Airy in the Catocin Mountains outside of Thurmont, Maryland. The camp was owned and operated by a Jewish charitable foundation in Baltimore; it is still in operation today, more than sixty years later, Camp Airy is situated on a hillside, reached from a narrow winding dirt road curving upwards from Maryland Route 550. From the top of the hill, there is a splendid view eastward across the foothills of the Catocins to the coastal plain beyond. The cabins were placed in clusters along that road, but the dining room, activities buildings and social hall were at the top of the hill, so that among the few recollections I have of that summer were the arduous walks we took in the summer heat, up the hill and down again, for our three meals and our activities.

Freshly into adolescence a year earlier, I had experienced the onset not only of puberty but of asthma as well. It would become a decades-long burden for me. Fortunately, I was born in an era when the pharmaceutical companies had begun to develop medications that would control asthma attacks. Father in his time had to combat these sieges by huddling over a little Bunsen-burner heater, over which was placed a tin of foul-smelling coal tar derivative, a black gunk. With a kitchen towel over his head, he waited for the burner to heat the medication, then inhaled those fumes to clear up the bronchial tubes. By 1948, medical science had progressed beyond that primitive treatment. At Camp Airy, I was armed with Isuprel, tiny tablets which one placed under the tongue to dissolve. The tablets had a vile bitter taste, but the Isuprel effectively stimulated the adrenalin, causing the asthma to abate. Another camper at Airy was less fortunate. His asthma was far more serious, so serious that, when an attack came on, he had to inject himself in the thigh (we now call it mainlining when heroin addicts do it) with an ephedrine

derivative. The inside of his thigh was pockmarked with the many traces of the shots he had given himself.

For me, the highlights of the summer at Airy were the visits to Camp Louise, the girls' camp down the road from us. We senior campers were bused to the girls' camp for regular Saturday night socials. On the afternoons preceding the socials, we showered, worked a dab of Brylcreem into our hair and combed it in the approved pompadour style, then put on our freshly laundered clothes and waited for the bus to take us to Camp Louise. The girls' camp was built around a pond, its social hall at the water's edge with a veranda projecting out over it. On those warm summer evenings, with romance in the air, girls and boys would pair off and amble out outside, sit together on the railing of the veranda and look out at the moonlit pond. Ah, youth! On the shores of that pond I practiced my budding skills in wooing one of the Camp Louise girls, her name and face lost to me now.

The summer of 1948 at Camp Airy was my last as a traditional camper. There was to be one more summer away, in 1949, at Stockbridge Work Camp. I knew its director, Hans Maeder, as director of the Walden School when I began there in 1948. Maeder's dream was to own and operate a private high school where teen-age students from all over the world could enroll to acquire the training they would need to be useful citizens in the new age then dawning with the end of World War II. His was the same impulse that prompted Algernon Black to found the Encampment for Citizenship, which I was to attend two years later, in 1951.

Just south of the picturesque Berkshire Hills village of Stockbridge, Maeder found the right place for his school, which was to be named after the town. He and his wife, Ruth Gordon, purchased what had been the summer estate of Daniel Rhodes Hanna, the son of Mark Hanna, chairman of the board of the Cleveland Fuel & Iron Co. and a founder of U.S. Steel.

The Hanna mansion, roughly L-shaped, had thirty rooms. The house had a lower course of stone, topped by white-painted shingles reaching to the eaves, under a slate roof. At the apex of the semi-circular driveway, extending from the main entrance, was a *porte cochere* which, in Hanna's time, had sheltered his guests as they arrived in their coaches and cars. To the north was the barn, a football field in length, with two silos. It, too, had a lower story of

stone and an upper story of weathered shake cedar shingles, topped by a slate roof.

Once Maeder had secured the location, he resigned as director of Walden and began to recruit teachers and students for the academic year starting September 1949. There was much to be done around the property to get it ready for the grand opening. By organizing a work camp for the summer preceding the opening, he obtained the labor he needed to make it happen. A “work camp” was a place where the hired help (the campers), instead of getting paid for their labor, paid the employer (the camp director) for the ennobling privilege of working for him. Stockbridge Work Camp was not unique; there were at that time other such places, notably Shaker Village Work Camp in New Lebanon, New York and Buck’s Rock Work Camp in New Milford, Connecticut. Today, the notion of working in the relentless heat without pay and in fact paying someone else for that “privilege” seems almost laughable. No such camp could long survive. Buck’s Rock is still in existence, advertising itself as a music and arts camp.

Because of Hans Maeder’s charisma and his passionate belief in the rightness of his dream, many able college students signed on to be counselors at the Stockbridge Work Camp, and many high schoolers, having outgrown the traditional camp, happily came as campers. I was one of those “happy campers,” probably with the benefit of a scholarship arranged between Hans and Mother. One of my counselors, Robert Wald, was a Harvard College student at the time. He went on to Harvard Law School and was for some years the lead partner in a Washington law firm, Wald Harkrader & Rockefeller. Fifty years after he had been my counselor at the Stockbridge Work Camp, I ran into Bob at a Washington cocktail party. I reminded him of what we had in common, and he seemed pleased with the recollection.

That summer of 1949, we had a job to do, and with incredible energy and high spirits we pitched in to get it done. We never felt exploited. Working shirtless in the summer heat, we tore out the overgrowth of scrub trees and shrubs, hacked out the roots, spread topsoil and clay and pushed an old rusty roller back and forth to create a level surface for the tennis court, then erected the chicken wire fence surrounding it. In the same way, we also built a full basketball court, with posts and backboards at each end. Another crew restored the decrepit swimming pool. There were also

classrooms and dormitory rooms to repair and paint before the first students arrived. We sweated in the summer sun, mopped our foreheads and pitched in again, feeling like *halutzim* (pioneers) on a kibbutz in pre-war Palestine. The difference: across the road from the estate was the Stockbridge Bowl, a man-made pond, with a small beach, fringed by dark green firs and dappled birches, where we could swim and cool off. Another difference: we ate our meals in the baronial Hanna lodge and slept not in tents but in rooms once occupied by Daniel Hanna's guests.

Early in the summer, I volunteered to run the camp store, ordering candy and other necessities from the distributor in Pittsfield. It was run as a cooperative, with the campers buying shares in the business; their money provided the original working capital that I used to buy the inventory. The store was operated out of a room in what had been the silo of the old barn. Every evening at closing I counted the money in the cashbox, and locked the wooden door behind me. Perhaps there was a duplicate key in the wrong hands; for whatever reason, there were chronic shortages in my merchandise inventory and the books never balanced, so someone must have helped himself to the contents of the cashbox as well. At the end of the summer, there was no profit and no money to return to the camper. That experience convinced me, if I needed convincing, that retail business was not my forte.

On weekday evenings there were hootenannies in the parlor of the lodge, two of the counselors accompanying us on the folk guitar. We sang with gusto the folksongs, work songs and leftist anthems that I had already learned at Walden, songs made popular by The Weavers, Burl Ives, Leadbelly, Josh White and others. There were songs sung by the men of the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War: "Vive la Quince Brigada" and "Hans Beimler, Kamerad"; songs from Dachau and Buchenwald, "Freiheit" and "Die Moorsoldaten" ("The Peat Bog Soldiers"); union songs such as "Joe Hill" and "Union Maid"; and the old favorites collected by Allan Lomax: "Worried Man Blues," "Careless Love," "On Top of Old Smoky," and "Red River Valley." An old gospel hymn that began, "Jesus is our leader, we shall not be moved," became, at hootenannies like these, "Trotsky (sometimes we substituted "Truman") is our leader, we shall not be moved." I sang the politically-tinged songs as enthusiastically as the other campers did, but my heart was not in it; I did not share their radical politics.

Weekends were given over to a different kind of music: classical music at Tanglewood. In the 1940's and early 50's, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, under the baton of maestro Serge Koussevitsky, was in its heyday. World-famous soloists, the likes of the pianists Artur Schnabel, Claudio Arrau, and Robert and Gaby Casadesu, and the cellist Gregor Piatigorsky, performed with the BSO at Tanglewood. For the Friday and Saturday evening concerts in the Shed (the concert hall) we set out in the early evening, walking along the country road the mile and a half that separated Stockbridge Work Camp from the Tanglewood grounds. As we walked, we would pair off, girls and boys. I usually tried to couple up with Janet, a girl from Long Island who was later to be a classmate of mine at Cornell.

On arriving at the Tanglewood grounds, we would spread our blanket on the lawn that sloped gently downhill from the back of the Shed, eat our picnic supper and then stretch out on the blanket. As evening shadows lengthened, the lights in the Shed were dimmed, maestro Koussevitsky gave the downbeat and the music began. The weekly programs were similar: an overture, perhaps the *Egmont* or the *Leonore Overture* of Beethoven, a piano or violin concerto featuring the guest soloist, and then, after intermission, a symphony. With the music swelling from the front of the hall, those of us on the Lawn wrapped the blanket more tightly around our bodies and snuggled together to ward off the evening chill. The lofty music from the Shed combined with our innocent fumbblings under the blanket; those were ethereal evenings, never to be forgotten. Then came the closing crescendo, final bows and effusive applause. As the lights of the Shed came back on, we picked up our blankets and in the darkness trudged back to Stockbridge Work Camp.

Hans Maeder's Stockbridge International School stayed open for 27 years. As times changed, enrollment fell off. Perhaps foreign students of high school age preferred the metropolitan settings of New York, Washington and Boston to the isolation of the Berkshires. One writer suggested that, by the mid-1970's, Maeder's vision of a democratic society had been achieved; prospective students saw no need to strive for those goals. Maeder retired in 1971 and returned to New York City. The school struggled on for five more years before closing its doors.

In 1979, 30 years after my days as a camper at Stockbridge Work Camp, my wife and I were in the Berkshires, bringing our children home from their nearby camp. Intent on revisiting the scenes of my younger years, I headed west to Stockbridge and found, branching off from the village green, the narrow road that winds southward to the Hanna estate. I knew that Hans Maeder's school no longer existed, and did not expect to find at that location a flourishing school or other institution. Just as "you can't go home again," you cannot return to other childhood venues and expect them to be, thirty years later, as you had remembered them. Nevertheless, I was unprepared for the sight that met our eyes as we pulled into the gravel driveway.

The Stockbridge International School, formerly the Daniel Hanna estate, now presented a scene out of a Gothic novel. Where once lifelong friendships had been formed and adolescent crushes experienced in all their sweetness and pain, where teenage voices had been raised in excitement, now there was an ineffable stillness. The magnificent barn had burned down. Nothing of that great structure remained except the ivy-covered foundations. What an inferno that must have been, and how overmatched the local volunteer firefighters when those immense timbers were set ablaze! Somberly, we turned from the ruins of the barn to the main house, passing under the *porte cochere* that once welcomed Hanna's guests and, later, the teachers and students of the Stockbridge International School. Of the great lodge, only the shell remained. The shingles were ripped off and the windows broken. Everywhere inside was the musty odor and the debris of longstanding neglect: shards of glass, doors torn from their hinges, and pools of rainwater. The entryway was wide open and untended vines climbed in dense profusion from the ground all the way to the eaves. Needless to say, the tennis courts and basketball court that we had worked so hard to create were unrecognizable; only the stanchions for the nets and the basketball hoops remained. Forlornly, I returned to the car, saddened not only by the physical deterioration, but by the short life and disappointing end to Hans Maeder's noble vision. *Eheu, tempis mutantis!* <sup>147</sup>

After that, from age 16 on, I stayed home, enduring in those days before residential air-conditioning the summer heat of the City reflecting from the sidewalks and building facades and softening the asphalt in the city streets. As the Drifters sang it:

*Oh, when the sun beats down and  
melts the tar up on the roof,  
And your shoes get so hot,  
you wish your tired feet were fireproof.  
Under the boardwalk, down by the sea,  
on a blanket with my baby, that's where I'll be.*<sup>148</sup>

When that song was on the charts in the summer of 1964, it rang true for me as for millions of New Yorkers. On hot summer weekends, I often climbed the stairs to the roof of our apartment building, bringing with me a towel to lie on and a portable radio on which to listen to that afternoon's Yankee game. Yes, I could feel the melting tar clinging to the soles of my sneakers. And yes, I knew all about hot tired feet from first-hand experience of summers in New York. I had not hidden "under the boardwalk, down by the sea, on a blanket with my baby," but I had cuddled with a girl my age on a blanket spread out on the Tanglewood lawn. From the one to the other wasn't so much of a stretch. I could relate to that verse as well.

That summer, when I was 16, I stayed in the city and worked at Sachs (no relation of mine) Quality Stores. The father of one of my high school classmates, Susan Goldman, was a vice-president at the firm; it was through him that I got the job in the men's clothing department of the chain's East 149th Street location, not far from Alexander's and the original Loehmann's store. Sachs Quality Stores was what was called in the trade a "borax" store, where goods are sold at low prices, but everything is sold "on time," at enormously inflated interest rates. Lacking cash, the lower-income customers who were drawn to the store had to pay in monthly installments, at exorbitant interest rates. As a result, they ended up paying far more in interest than the ticket price of the merchandise and more than the more affluent customers who could pay the entire ticket price at the time of purchase at the downtown stores. I hated my job, but, after all, I was earning 60 cents an hour and needed the money.

One hot, sunny afternoon, while making a delivery for the store in the East Bronx, I passed a young girl my age, Hispanic-looking, sitting on a brownstone stoop. As I came by her, she flashed me a marvelous smile, open and totally un-self-conscious. That smile stunned me. At 16, I was shy and gawky, convinced that, around

girls, I was the perennial “right fielder” as I had been in the pick-up softball games. But now I said to myself, Wow! I must be pretty good if I can draw that kind of smile from such a beautiful girl! Clearly it made an impression on me, because I remember that Borinqueña and her beautiful smile to this day.

At the end of that summer of 1950, I had an unforgettable experience of a different sort. I decided on short notice to treat myself to a long weekend on Martha’s Vineyard. I caught a bus bound for New Bedford, arriving there at 11:00 pm, thinking to stay overnight in that city and then catch the next morning’s boat to the island. As I stepped off the bus in New Bedford, the city completely dark around me, a well-dressed middle-aged man came up and offered to show me to a hotel. I said that I planned to stay at the YMCA that night. He said it was too late, the Y was closed, and that he would take me to a hotel that was still open. I took him up on his offer. What a rube I was! I was the living proof that you don’t have to be a country boy or an immigrant just off the boat to be a rube, a naïf. It was oppressively hot and humid that night in August. Side by side with the man who had picked me up—and that’s what it was, a pick-up—I walked a considerable distance with suitcase in hand, until we came to a small park, where he suggested we sit down and rest. Now I was getting edgy. We hadn’t been sitting for long when the man slid over close to me on the bench and put his hand on my thigh. Grabbing my suitcase, I bolted up and hightailed it out of the park and back downtown. Finding the YMCA was no problem. The door was open, there was a clerk at the registration desk, and, yes, rooms were available. Still kicking myself for my gullibility but relieved that the episode had a happy ending, I signed in and went up to my room.

After two pleasant days at Oak Bluff on Martha’s Vineyard, it was time to return home, by ferry from the island to New Bedford and then by bus to New York. On arriving in New Bedford, I had a problem: I had not enough money to get back to New York on the bus that was then leaving for the City. Looking at the few bills in my wallet, I asked the clerk at the bus terminal: “How far can I get for \$3.00?” He said, “New London.” “OK,” I said, “I’ll take it.” It was late at night when I boarded the bus. In the darkness I moved up the aisle to the rear of the bus, took an empty seat and “fell asleep.” When the bus reached New London, I was still “asleep.” I “slept” through the stops at New Haven, Milford, Bridgeport and

Fairfield. When the bus reached Westport, the driver finally matched tickets and passengers. He walked to the back of the bus where I was “fast asleep” and jostled me, saying, “Hey, buddy, you missed your stop. You were supposed to get off in New London.” “Where am I?” I said, pretending drowsiness. “You’re in Westport,” the driver answered. “Omigosh, I overslept. I gotta get back to New London.” “Well, if you hurry,” the bus driver said, “that bus over there is heading right back there.” I hurried off the bus and dashed into the men’s room in the terminal to wait there until the New London bus had departed. Then I hit the road to hitchhike back to Manhattan.

I was in luck: the first truckdriver who stopped for me was headed for the city. We were moving through the Bronx on the Old Post Road when a woman driving a car in the lane next to ours edged over into our lane, forcing the truckdriver to hit the brakes hard. “Now watch this,” he said. “That dame’s gonna be sorry she pulled that stunt.” At 30 miles an hour, amid the heavy traffic on the Post Road, he brought his rig up to bump against her car, then braked to fall back, then moved forward until he had made contact again. I should have empathized with the woman in the car, who was probably terrified. Instead, I marveled, as any 16-year-old boy would, at this display of machismo and skill on the driver’s part. Fortunately, the woman in the car in front of us didn’t step on the brakes, else there could have been a serious collision. She soon moved into another lane to avoid further contact with the truck, while I spent the rest of my time in the truck in a state of white-knuckled tension.

I should have learned from that experience and stopped hitchhiking, but no, I continued to do so, by car, by truck and on airplanes. On the road and in the sky, there were to be other such adventures and other interesting people to meet. The only hitchhiking I did not do was to “ride the rails” with the hoboes. That was too dangerous, even then. Now the world has changed, and I would not for a minute consider picking up a hitchhiker or “thumbing” a ride. The hitchhiker is likely to be a felon, a hophead or a runaway; the driver could likewise be drunk, on drugs or have perverted intentions. Whether as a driver or hitchhiker, it would be foolish to take the chances that I did as a teenager.

There was to be one more “camp” experience during a summer vacation from college. This was Camp Lehman, a camp for young

adults run by the 92d Street YMHA. It was called a camp to project a woodsy, primitive atmosphere, although it was, in purpose, not too different from the more elegant Borscht Belt resorts. I went there in 1954 at Mother's prompting. She suggested that I escape the city's sweltering heat and humidity and meet nice Jewish girls in a carefree setting, and that was Camp Lehman's reason for being. I was not opposed to that idea, so I booked a week in August at the camp.

Camp Lehman was a hothouse of hormonal frenzy. I had no sooner arrived and stepped out of the taxi that brought me from the train station when two young women approached and tried to stake out their claim to me. One of them, Camille, was short and feisty, attracting me with her French accent. She came on to me like gangbusters, as we say today. The other, Victoria, was taller, slender, with blue eyes and curly light-brown hair. Her approach was more muted; she struck me as more refined. Camille gave promise of more between-the-sheets activity; Victoria sent out no such signals. Any red-blooded man would have chosen Camille, but I recoiled from her aggressive approach. I wanted to do the pursuing. So I went off with Victoria, leaving Camille to sulk. Unfortunately, Victoria lived in the farthest reaches of Brooklyn. Back in the city, I saw her once or twice, then decided it was not worth the effort, and rued having rejected Camille and the momentary fling that she offered.

A final thought from re-reading these lines: is it not remarkable that camp experiences stretching back more than sixty years remain bright filaments in the texture of memory, whereas one's school experiences from those same years are, with a few exceptions, more like what Virginia Woolf calls the "nondescript cotton wool"<sup>149</sup> of everyday life?

## GROWING UP AS AN AMERICAN JEW

**S***chwer tzu zayn a Yid* (“It’s tough to be a Jew”). More than once I heard Grandfather at the dinner table, out of the blue, sigh and utter this phrase. It always surprised me that Grandfather uttered this Yiddish saying, or anything else in Yiddish, for that matter, he, who came from an entirely assimilated family, steeped in *Kultur*, and without a shred of Jewish education. As far as I know, he had never set foot in a synagogue in this country except perhaps at my bar mitzvah and Ben’s.

American Jews unfamiliar with the long history of Jews in Germany think of them as assimilationist, the very antithesis of the orthodox Jews who peopled the shtetls of eastern Europe. It is true that Reform Judaism, also called Liberal Judaism, had its start in Germany in the 19th century, and that Reform Jewish rabbis from Germany, arriving in America in the great wave of emigration in 1848, planted the seeds of that movement here in this country. But the image of German Jews as godless secularists is off the mark. Modern Orthodoxy, which strives to meld traditional observance and the secular world, had its origins in 19th century Germany, with R. Samson Raphael Hirsch and R. Azriel Hildesheimer as its founders.

Among my immediate ancestors, the degree of observance varied from ultra-Orthodox at one extreme to almost complete assimilation on the other. My grandfather Curt Sachs’s family seems to have borne lightly the mantle of Jewishness. To a lesser degree, that was true of my mother’s parents and grandparents as well. Grandmother’s parents, on the other hand, came from a background that was steeped in religion. Her maternal grandfather, Benjamin Wolff, was an itinerant *melamed*, a Jewish schoolteacher who traveled from town to town giving instruction to young Jewish boys and preparing them for their bar mitzvahs. Louis Lewin, my

great-grandfather, came from an ultra-orthodox Jewish background. His parents had emigrated from Poland, first to Prussia and then to Berlin. There they lived on the Grenadierstrasse in the heart of the *Scheunenviertel*,<sup>150</sup> the seedy neighborhood that was the destination for so many of the *Ostjuden* who made their way to Berlin in the mid-19th century. As a young boy, Lewin was enrolled in a *cheder*, a Jewish primary school, where instruction was in Yiddish and the boys were drilled in Torah and Talmud, with a small admixture of secular studies. Only the brightest boys had an education beyond the *cheder*, and that was limited to the *Yeshiva*, the upper school where boys were trained for the rabbinate. Louis Lewin had a different destiny. Recognizing his exceptional talent in the sciences, his teachers at the *cheder* recommended to his parents that he be enrolled in the secular gymnasium for further studies. His father, Hirsch, stoutly opposed that idea, but his more enlightened mother, Rachel, prevailed. That was the first step in his brilliant scientific career. Despite his success in the secular world, Louis Lewin never forgot his origins. Observing the Fifth Commandment, Louis Lewin honored his elders by walking every Saturday the goodly distance from his home to theirs, to spend the Sabbath with them. He instilled in his family a love of Judaism and the discipline of regular synagogue attendance and Jewishness in the home.

*Schwer tzu zayn a Yid.* . . . Despite the unlikely source of these words, coming from Grandfather's lips, there was truth in them, to be sure. We are reminded of it by our very name, Sachs. Grandfather more than once told me that it represents the Hebrew letters *shin kuf shin* (SKS). These letters, he said, were an acronym for the words "*Sera Kiddushin miStendal*," or "seeds of the holy martyrs of Stendal," who died *al kiddush haShem*, for the sanctification of the Holy Name. The name is said to have been adopted by the survivors of Jews in Stendal, a town in the state of Saxony-Anhalt, west of Berlin, who were burned at the stake in 1579 because they refused to convert to Christianity. Another researcher claims that the name originates not in Stendal but in Speyer, a town in the Rhineland. The name, he says,

*goes back to the martyrs—who in Jewish tradition are given the attribute 'holy'—who perished in the towns and cities of Southwest Germany during the Crusades; in particular, it is traceable to the city of Speyer.*<sup>151</sup>

Whether the name originates in Stendal or in Speyer, in the sixteenth century or as far back as the Crusades, the martyrdom that is at its root was neither the beginning nor the end of Jewish travails founded in Jew-hatred. Had not millions of others, down through the centuries, been brutally tortured and slain with the *Sh'ma*<sup>152</sup> on their lips? Cossacks, Crusaders, Knights Templar, inquisitors, princes, kings, dukes, illiterate peasants and Nazis, the well-organized and the mob alike, had killed Jews solely for their faith. In our own family, had not Grandfather, notwithstanding his lofty reputation, lost his position on the faculty of the University of Berlin solely because of his Jewishness? Had not our family been uprooted from its homeland because of it? Had not Grandmother lost her mother and sister and had not Mother lost her mother, my other grandmother, to the Nazis' Jew-hatred? Truly, it was *schwer tzu zayn a Yid*.

Although in earlier times millions of Jews had fled to America, the *goldene medinah*, the place where it wouldn't be tough anymore to be a Jew, it could be difficult to be a Jew in this country, too. Here a Jew was not in peril of losing his life for that reason alone, although that happened from time to time. We remember, for example, Leo Frank, the Jewish pencil factory manager in Marietta, Georgia, wrongly accused of murdering one of his female employees. In 1915, Frank was dragged out of his jail cell in Milledgeville, Georgia, returned to Cobb County and hanged there by the mob.

Jew-baiting was not an unusual occurrence, even in my childhood. In the 1930's, Americans could tune in on their radio to the anti-Semitic rantings of Father Charles Coughlin. Well into the 1930's and 40's, the elite universities had their quotas, limiting the number of Jewish students admitted. In elegant suburbs such as Grosse Pointe Hills and Bronxville, restrictive covenants barred the sale of homes to Jews. Hospitals denied admitting privileges to Jewish doctors. Excluded as members of the establishment country clubs, Jews were driven to establish their own.

In Germany, it was common to hear one Gentile say to another, "*Ich hat' ihm geeyddelt*."<sup>153</sup> Similarly, ordinary Americans, otherwise educated and professing not to have an anti-Semitic bone in their bodies, would say, after bargaining with a merchant or other businessman, "I jewed him down." Anti-Semitism was so pervasive that many Jews changed their names, adopting names less obviously

Jewish, and had their noses “fixed” if they were born with what they thought to be a characteristically “Jewish nose.” Still today, especially at Eastertide, we are reminded that some Americans still think of Jews as “Christ-killers.”<sup>154</sup>

Growing up in a heavily Catholic neighborhood, I had my own taste of that pervasive anti-Semitism. The shortest way from our house to my elementary school, PS 152, took me past Our Lady Queen of Martyrs church and its parish school on Arden Street. To walk past that school was to risk being stopped by a band of students from that school who would call us “kikes” and punch us out, or threaten to. Sometimes, no actual punches were thrown, but you would still hear their derisive laughter as they passed and went on their way. I learned to use other routes to get to and from school.

Thousands of other Jewish kids who grew up in New York in the 40’s and 50’s shared with Ben and me that experience of “running the gauntlet” past the neighborhood parish school. One man, now a Hollywood actor, remembered that, *“To get to school, you had to fight your way through the freckles”* (a derogatory reference to Irish-American boys). A female classmate of his remembered that *“In winter, we had to walk to school in a convoy. They would nail us with ice balls.”*<sup>155</sup>

Those Irish-American boys are now grandfathers, as I am. Have the past 60 years taught them anything? Do they accept as their own the papal apologies to the Jews, first from Pope John XXIII and in more recent years from Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI,<sup>156</sup> or does there still burn within them the tiny flame of Jew-hatred inculcated in them by their catechism back in the 1940’s? Perhaps more important, what have they taught their sons and grandsons? Do they teach that Jesus’s injunction to “love ye one another” includes Jews and Protestants and men and women of all races and religions, or, having learned nothing in all these years, do they still spout the triumphalist gospel of the Church that, over the past millennium, planted the seed for the Crusades, the Inquisition and the Holocaust? I like to think it is the former, and that for many years now Jewish boys and girls have been able to walk past Our Lady Queen of Martyrs without having to duck a fist or flinch from anti-Semitic epithets.

Our synagogue, Ohav Sholaum (Love of Peace), was the northernmost Orthodox synagogue in Manhattan. Today, using the

Sephardic and Israeli transliteration, we would say Ahav Shalom. But the sign in front of the synagogue proclaimed in the German Ashkenazic manner that this was Congregation Ohav Sholaum, pronounced Ohav ShoLOUM (the LOU as in “loud”), with the accent on the second syllable.

Founded in 1940 by German-Jewish refugees, the congregation had no permanent home in its early years, renting space in the neighborhood as its needs required. By the time I went there for Hebrew School and for my bar mitzvah training, it had found a temporary “home” in what had been a large retail store adjacent to an automobile dealership showroom near the intersection of Sherman Avenue and Broadway. In 1951, as I was leaving for college, Ohav Sholaum moved into its permanent home, a simple redbrick building at Broadway and 196th Street, a block south of the rented premises. It eventually grew to become one of the largest synagogues in northern Manhattan, reaching a peak membership of 800 families before demographic changes caused its membership to dwindle and its doors to close.

There were other synagogues in Inwood, Orthodox, Conservative and Reform, but, for the most part, these did not attract the new German-Jewish immigrants. We belonged to Ohav Sholaum because it was within walking distance of our home and we felt comfortable there. In that respect, we were no different from earlier generations of Jews. More at ease among their own kind than among strangers, even when they were Jewish strangers, the new arrivals gathered together as *Landsleute* (natives of the same European city or town) to organize synagogues, clubs and social service organizations. So it had always been since Jews began to arrive in large numbers in America. An elderly German-Jewish couple described in *Frankfurt on the Hudson* how they chose a synagogue when they first arrived in Washington Heights:

*In the beginning every shabbos we went to a different shul, just to look around, then see where we would fit in best. And that's where we ended up [in a German-Jewish congregation]. It's the same background as we have from home, the same nusach [liturgy], the same tunes.*<sup>157</sup>

Once a family joined a synagogue, it brought in other family members and friends, reinforcing the “in-group” feeling of the place.

We felt at ease at Ohav Sholaum prayer services because the sermons were in German and those prayers that were not sung or spoken in Hebrew were recited in German. Even the Hebrew prayers and the Torah readings were spoken in the familiar German accent and the prayers were sung to melodies also familiar from "the other side." However, aside from their use of the German language and the familiar liturgy, Mother had not much in common with the members of Ohav Sholaum. They came for the most part from small towns and villages in central and southern Germany. They had a parochial outlook on life and had little or no higher education. For that reason, Mother did not participate in the social life of Ohav Sholaum, nor did we. The lesson learned at Ohav Sholaum applied with a few exceptions throughout my life: you went to the synagogue to attend to your spiritual needs, not because it was a "Jewish Center," a wellspring of social nourishment. Your fellow-synagogue-goers were Jewish, to be sure, but you'd have to look hard to find someone with whom you had anything in common besides your shared faith.

From the outside, Ohav Sholaum's rented premises looked like every other storefront, with a small entryway on the left and a store window to the right. However, the store window, instead of displaying merchandise, was hung with heavy drapes to keep peering eyes from looking inside.

Inside the synagogue, all on one floor, was the L-shaped worship hall. One entered first into the narrower space, about thirty feet in width and fifty feet long. This was the women's section, separated from the wider part of the hall, where the men sat, by the *mehitzah* (separation), a low wall topped by a curtain, the entire partition being about five feet high. The male congregants continued past the women's section to reach the larger area assigned to them. There were no pews, only wooden folding seats lined up in rows on the grimy wooden floor. The only natural light, aside from the small window giving onto the street, came from dirty skylights in the ceiling.

The *bimah* (platform for the Ark) stood against the far wall. As in many other synagogues of its day, the Ark itself was covered with a burgundy velvet curtain, gold fringed. In the center of that curtain was a crown in raised gold embroidery, and underneath it the Hebrew letters *Kuf Taf Resh* or KTR, standing for *Keter*, "Crown." The Kabbalah refers to the Torah as the Crown of Man's Wisdom.

The watchword in the German-Jewish synagogue, honored more in the breach than in the observance, was *schlicht und würdig* (unostentatious and dignified). A cathedral-like silence was the ideal. During services, even as some men strolled the aisles, chatting with friends, others stood in place and *daven*-ed (prayed) silently. *Shokeling* (rocking back and forth or from side to side in silent prayer), vocal outbursts of prayer and other displays of emotion, such as might be seen in non-German Orthodox synagogues, were considered “Oriental” cultural traits, to be strictly avoided.<sup>158</sup>

*When a pious eastern European came [to a German-Jewish synagogue] and raised his voice in prayer, he would be shushed with an admonition from his elderly neighbors: “Wir haben schon einen Chazzan” [“We already have a cantor”].*<sup>159</sup>

Old-timers at Ohav Sholaum would have viewed as offensive, almost pagan, the exuberant dancing in the aisles and rhythmic clapping seen today not only in Chassidic circles but in some Conservative synagogues as well.

The self-control that the congregation expected of its members was demanded to an even greater degree of the *Chazzan*, the cantor. Like those who chanted at other German-Jewish Orthodox congregations, the cantor at Ohav Sholaum was expected to sing in a straightforward manner, without dwelling on any one note. Trills and arpeggios were frowned upon as “showing off.” Bravura solos and displays of emotion, such as the extended “oy-oy-oys” and “ay-ay-ays” and “lai-lai-lais” and tremolos heard from cantors in other synagogues, were also beyond the pale.

German Orthodox Jewish services were long and formal. No part of the service was omitted. On Shabbos, the *Shemona Esrai* (the “18 Benedictions”) or, as we call it today, the *Amidah* (“the standing,” so-called because one stands throughout the long prayer), was first read aloud by the cantor or rabbi and then repeated silently by the congregation, both during the morning service and again during the *mussaf* (additional service after the Torah reading). Only men were called to the Torah for the *aliyah* (the “ascent”—the honor of being called to the Torah). It would be forty years before Jewish women were accorded the right to participate in the service. Many shuls continue to exclude them even today.

When those chosen for the honor had made their way to the *bimah* (the platform in front of the Ark), the *gabbai* (sexton) started with the *misheberach*, or blessing, asking for divine protection for the man called up to the Torah. The *misheberachs* were endless, as the man who had been called up invoked the blessing for every member of his family. Before each donation the *gabbai* inclined his head toward the man at his right to ask whom he wished to honor, how much he was giving and to whom. The recipient of the *aliyah* honor responded in a whisper, and the *gabbai* announced it to the congregation: \$2.00 in honor of brother so-and-so, \$5.00 in memory of father and mother, and so on.

During the *misheberachs* the buzzing in the synagogue would grow more insistent—after all, only the *gabbai*, the man who had been called up and his family were interested in the proceedings. Finally, his patience at an end, the *gabbai* would pause, pound the table and shout out, “*Ich bitte um Ruhe!*” (“Silence, please!”). That was a common occurrence in other synagogues as well, though the worshippers might be admonished in Yiddish and not German:

*When the din became unbearable, the president would slam his hand down [on the podium] and shout, “Shveig! Shveig” [“Silence!”] The noise would subside for a couple of minutes, then return to the roar that had brought the president to the podium in the first place.<sup>160</sup>*

On the High Holidays, the *aliyot* were parceled out more formally, being auctioned off before the start of the Torah reading. The president of the congregation, Leo Klein, conducted the *Versteigerung der Mitzva's* (the *aliyah*-auction) from the *bimah*. He was a burly man with an expansive waistline, the owner of a fur shop on Dyckman Street and the most prosperous man in the congregation. As men in the hall asked to be recognized to make their bid, Mr. Klein would point to them and call out, “Mr. Goldberger, *chamisha dollar Bais haKneses*” (\$5.00 for the building fund), “Mr. Grünfeld, *fünfzehn dollar Talmud Torah*” (\$15.00 for the Hebrew School) “Mr. Weinstein, *zwanzig dollar Chevra Kadisha*” (\$20.00 to the burial society) and so on. In that way, the men who would be called to the Torah were selected for their Torah honors.

After the Torah reading came the prayer for the government and for the congregation and its leaders.<sup>161</sup> German-born like the rest of us, the rabbi, Ralph Neuhaus, intoned these prayers majestically in his native language and ours, beginning with the words, “*Herr der*

*Welt, Vater alle Menschen* . . . "Lord of the World, Father of all mankind." The stately cadence of those words moves me still, after all these years.

Then it was time to hear the rabbi's sermon. At first, Rabbi Neuhaus delivered his homilies entirely in German. In 1949, he began to repeat his sermons, giving them in German at the Shabbat morning service and in heavily-accented English during the Shabbat afternoon service for the benefit of the younger members of the congregation who had forgotten their German or had never learned it. Rabbi Neuhaus was a skillful and passionate preacher in both languages. His sermons began on a courteous, rational note: "*Meine Damen und Herren* . . ." "Ladies and gentlemen . . ." He would continue on this low-key level, as if he were entering into a rational discourse with the congregation. Then, like a Pentecostal stem-winder, he would get louder and the words would come faster and faster. Beads of sweat would form on his forehead and upper lip. As he became increasingly exercised, he would pull a large handkerchief from his pocket and bring it to his face, dabbing and wiping at his forehead, lips and mustache. At the height of his sermon, he would also begin to spray spittle from the lectern out into the first rows of seats. We learned not to sit in those seats or risk being showered with Neuhaus spray during the sermon. Finally, long after he had made his point, he would conclude with the final "Amen," and, his hands gripping the edges of the lectern, slump forward in silence, seemingly exhausted by his oratorical endeavors.

Rabbi Neuhaus would go on to serve Ohav Sholaum as its spiritual leader for fifty years. His congregation was so closely identified with him, and he with it, that the synagogue was referred to as "the Neuhaus synagogue," just as Congregation Adas Yeshurun, the much larger synagogue a few blocks away on Bennett Avenue, was universally known as "the Breuer synagogue," after its longtime rabbi, Dr. Joseph Breuer.

On the second day of Rosh HaShanah and other holy days, Jews, gathered in their synagogues all over the world, recite the *Yizkor* (Remembrance) service in memory of their departed loved ones. Today, most people live out their Biblically-allotted three-score-and-ten years or more, and they are likely to die at home, in a hospital bed or in a nursing home. More often than not, *Yizkor* today is prayed in fond remembrance of the deceased and in

celebration of a long life well lived. It was otherwise in the years during and immediately after the war. Six million people had died, and not in beds with clean sheets. Many more had died prematurely, even before the war began, murdered in the concentration camps or on the streets, or of illness or suicide. Every member of the congregation had lost a parent, an aunt or uncle, grandparent, cousin, sister or brother, or spouse. As a result, death was not the natural end to a long and fruitful life, but a premature cutting off, an abrupt separation from loved ones. Consequently, when the men and women of Ohav Sholaum read, quietly, “*Yizkor, elohim, . .*” “We remember, O Lord, our beloved wife, or husband, father or mother, son or daughter, . . .” it brought tears to their eyes, many of them beating their breast and weeping bitterly, expressing the pain of their loss. Only at the recitation of *Yizkor* were such displays of emotion permitted. *Yizkor* was a solemn, powerfully moving experience, not a prayer read with dry eyes as it is for the most part today.

It was important to Mother and to Grandmother that Ben and I receive a solid Jewish upbringing. Family tradition, at least on the Lewin side of the family, required it. Father, had he lived, would have seen to it. When Father died, prematurely, Mother could have reacted to his death as her mother had done when her Hermann had died, by shaking her fist at God and banishing him, and Judaism, from the house. That she did not do, perhaps because her few years with Father and his family had shown her what it could be like to live an authentically Jewish life. She did not rail at God for abandoning her in her hour of need. As a consequence, i grew up as a believing Jew, believing that God was not an avenging Deity, a punisher, a stern judge, but a supporting Deity, holding me up when sometimes my knees were buckling.

So, for Ben and me, a Jewish upbringing was bred in the bone. My Jewish education started at about age 8 with a private tutor who came to our apartment once a week. After two years of such tutoring, I began to attend twice-weekly Talmud Torah (Hebrew school) classes at Ohav Sholaum. There were no classrooms in that converted hall that I have already described. Instead, to the right of the *bimah*, about eight boys of the same age formed their wooden folding chairs into a circle, and the teacher, Mr. Rothschild, led us through our *aleph-beth* and Bible history. Mr. Rothschild was a short, wiry man with close-cropped black hair and penetrating dark brown

eyes, a little martinet, *un vrai Napoleon*. Ruler in hand, he would circle around the backs of the chairs as we students read from Torah or recited in Hebrew. Rothschild would whack that ruler rhythmically into the open palm of his left hand, as a conductor might wield his baton to establish the beat. When one of us failed to meet his expectations, and that happened often, the ruler would come down not into Rothschild's open palm, but onto the back or shoulder of the miscreant.

Like thousands of Jewish boys and girls before and since, I found Hebrew School endlessly boring. There were so many other places I preferred to be. One beautiful spring day, after a long afternoon "trapped" in Hebrew School, and exhilarated at the prospect of freedom, I ran full tilt down the aisle from my place alongside the *bimah* to the front door of the synagogue. Still running, I reached out with the flat of my palm to push the front door open and get to the fresh air outside. In my haste, I did not push against the door handle or the frame of the door. Instead, I pushed against one of the panes, and put my entire hand through the glass. There was no tempered glass in those days. Bleeding copiously from the gash in my wrist, I was rushed to Jewish Memorial Hospital, just three blocks away. The doctor on duty bound my wound, put a sterilizing ointment on it, and sent me home. Today, they would put stitches into the cut, but not in those days. There is a two-inch scar on my right wrist to this day, a permanent reminder of that glass door and the unpleasantness of Hebrew School.

About a year before my Bar Mitzvah, I began practicing for that day. I was told that the Torah readings for the Saturday nearest my birthday were to be *Vayakbel* and *Pekuday*, a double *parshah* (portion) in *Shmot* (Exodus). Whether it was the custom only at Ohav Sholaum or at every German-Jewish synagogue, or of orthodox synagogues generally, the bar mitzvah at that time was not expected to read the Haftarah, but only a segment of the Torah portion. My assigned part was Exodus 36, verses 1-20. Those verses describe how Moses appointed the master craftsman, Bezalel, and his assistant, Oholiav, to erect the tabernacle for the Israelites in the desert, and how the Israelite women enthusiastically stripped themselves of their gold jewelry so that it could be melted down for use in the tabernacle. At that time, I felt that this was not one of the more interesting *parashot* in the Torah. Only later in life did I realize

its significance: that every human being, whether highborn or lowborn, rich or poor, skilled or untrained, has something of value to contribute to the Lord's work. The gift might lie in the skill of his hands, as with Bezalel and Oholiav, or in the things that he or she holds dear that truly belong first to God. That's an important lesson that, as a 13-year-old, I missed "the first time around."

In addition to the reading of a segment from the Torah parshah, I was also expected to give a Bar Mitzvah *d'var Torah* (homily) related to my Torah portion. My great-grandfather Louis Sachs's *d'var Torah*, given at Juliusburg in the province of Silesia in 1853, was a lucid explanation of his Torah portion in German and Hebrew. His "*Torah Rede*" (Torah speech) would be beyond the capacity of most Jewish adults today, let alone of 13-year-old boys and girls. Under strict time limitations, Bar Mitzvah boys and girls today race through their speech in an almost incomprehensible singsong, throwing out glib clichés about the need for *Tzedakah* (charity) or ecological awareness. Then, hardly stopping for a breath, they reel off a list of persons—the rabbi, the cantor, the tutor, mom and pop, sister and brother—to whom thanks are due, and sit down.

My Bar Mitzvah speech fell between these extremes. At that time, in March 1947, the congregation was in the midst of a Building Fund drive (now we would call it, more elegantly, a "Capital Fund Campaign") for the permanent synagogue building that was to be built on Broadway. The Building Fund drive tied neatly to the Torah portion, and I jumped at the opportunity to link the two. In parting with their riches for the construction of the Holy Temple, I said, the Jews of old "set a good example for our congregation" as it sought to reach its goal in raising money for its permanent home. Then, addressing my Mother and grandparents in the front row, I concluded by saying

*Let me thank you again for your love and kindness, and may G'd give me enough strength to grow up and to be loyal and useful in the Jewish life which you and I want for myself.*

Ah, well, not many resolves made at age 13 are held to for a lifetime, and this one certainly was not.

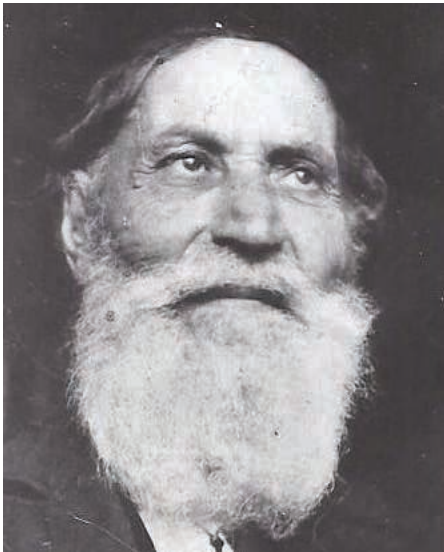
Standing on the *bimah* that Saturday morning in front of my family and the entire congregation, I felt no stage fright; rather, I



Eduard Sachs  
Great-great-grandfather  
(1810-1868)



Henriette Sachs  
Great-great-grandmother  
(1813-1884)



Great-great-grandfather  
Hirsch Lewin (1825-1916)



Great-great-grandmother  
Berthe Wolff (1833-1927)



Great-grandfather  
Louis Sachs (1839-1906)



Great-grandmother  
Anna Frölich Sachs (1841-1916)



Great-grandmother Clara Lewin (seated at right), with daughters Gertrud (left), Irene (center foreground) and Herta (right foreground), in courtyard of Alte Rabenstrasse residence, Hamburg, 1895



Great-grandparents Louis and Clara Lewin, undated



Louis Lewin (1850-1929)



Clara Lewin, age 6



Clara Lewin, age 12



Grandfather Hermann Feiler  
(1877-1918)



Grandmother Elisabet  
Leuchtag Feiler (1884-1943)



Great-grandmother Erna  
Sieradzki Leuchtag (1859-1915)



Great-grandfather  
Richard Leuchtag (1858-1915)



Grandmother Irene Sachs  
(1888-1985), age 6



Grandfather Curt Sachs  
(1881-1959), age 6



Grandparents Curt and Irene Sachs with son, George,  
Potsdammerplatz, Berlin, 1911



Curt Sachs's 50th birthday, June 1931. Background, l. to r.:  
George Sachs, Leonie Feiler. Gabrielle Sachs



(l. to r.) Irene Sachs, Curt Sachs, Clara  
Lewin, Scheveningen, Holland, 1937



Grandfather in his study, undated



Grandparents in the garden,  
Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1953



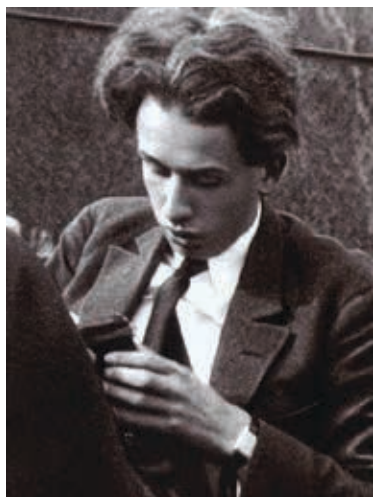
Louis Lewin and grandson, George,  
1912



Father, age 15, 1924



Father, 1932



Father,  
West Park, Madrid, 1935



Father, 1937  
The iconic passport photo



Mother, age 8, 1916



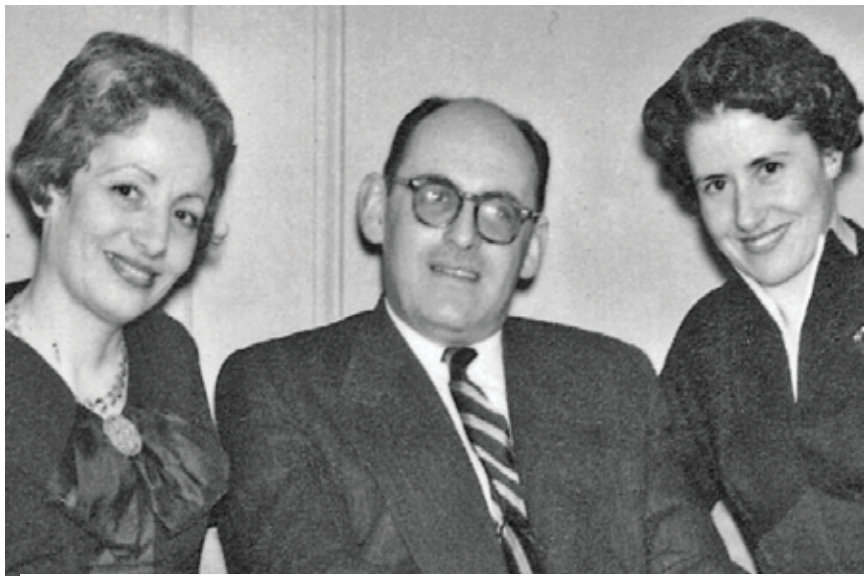
Mother, 1942



Mother at her desk, 1955



Stone Mountain, Georgia, 1961



Three siblings: Mother, uncle Helmut Feiler, aunt Stefanie Feiler (Lewy). Fort Lee, New Jersey, circa 1955



Daniel and Benjamin, Madrid, 1936



Daniel at the typewriter, 1938



Daniel and Benjamin at  
Daniel's Bar Mitzvah , 1947



Daniel, high school yearbook  
1951



Daniel with fellow enlisted men at Public  
Information Office, Camp Wolters, Texas, 1958

## The wedding, June 21, 1964



Bride and groom—the formal portrait



The bride's wedding portrait



After the reception, leaving for the honeymoon

## FAST FORWARD--2002



Front: daughter Julia Loeb, grandson Ezra, son-in-law Robert Loeb, granddaughter Talia, grandson Adam, sister-in-law Eleanor Klau; second row: daughter-in-law Roberta Sachs, son Noah Sachs, Ruth, holding grandson Jonah in her lap, Roberta's mother, Joanne Karlikow; rear: brother Benjamin Sachs, sister-in-law Jacqueline Strunk Sachs, Daniel, Roberta's stepfather, Abraham Karlikow, son George Sachs. Not shown (born 2003): Claudia Sachs, daughter of Roberta and Noah.

relished my time in the limelight, and had a keen sense of disappointment when it was all over.

It has become the custom in Reform and Conservative congregations to pelt the Bar Mitzvah boy with bonbons as a joyous and exhilarated climax to the successful conclusion of that great event. Not so at my Bar Mitzvah. Throwing bonbons up onto the *bimah* would have struck our congregation as most unseemly, a radical departure from the dignity that was expected to prevail in the synagogue.

My Bar Mitzvah was different from my children's and grandchildren's generation in another respect as well: after the Bar Mitzvah service ended, there was not, as there might be today, an elaborate *kiddush* and reception in the social hall, with gefilte fish and herring and a sweets table, followed by a grand sit-down dinner. There was no social hall at the rented premises that then housed Ohav Sholaum. Moreover, gefilte fish, whitefish and herring, "soul food" for the older wave of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, would have been strange foods to serve to a German-Jewish congregation and its guests. No, there was none of that after my Bar Mitzvah. Instead, our little family returned to Grandmother's apartment for a modest lunch of cold cuts on rye bread, potato salad and noodle kugel with apples and white raisins.

Even the gifts I received (and that feature of the Bar Mitzvah has not changed) were different from what a boy or girl might expect today. There was much greater emphasis given to presents of a specifically religious nature—a prayer book, the *Chumash* (the Five Books of Moses), or a mezuzah—than on today's stand-by, the check in the envelope. And yes, I received more than one fountain pen, the subject of so much humor in Jewish comedians' routines.

In preparing for my bar mitzvah, I was instructed in the use of the *tefillin*, the prayer phylacteries. These are two small boxes containing words of the Torah. The boxes are attached to straps, one set of which is wound around the arm, the other fits around the head. Observant Jews put on *tefillin* every day of the week except on Shabbat and holidays, in obedience to the Torah commandment (Deut. 6:5-8) that "thou shalt bind them as a sign upon thy hand and as frontlets between thine eyes." The Talmudical sages prescribed that the putting on of *tefillin* be the first obligation assumed by a Jewish boy after his bar mitzvah. Obedient to that command, I put on *tefillin* for about a month. As days passed, I

became more and more reluctant to tie the straps around my arm and head. I never got it quite right. Seeing no purpose in performing this ritual, I felt no obligation to continue. Finally, I stopped putting them on and never resumed the practice. Nor, for that matter, did I ever attend post-Bar Mitzvah classes, as many Jewish boys and girls do today during their high school years. I do not recall that Ohav Sholaum offered any such classes, although I am sure that other synagogues in the neighborhood did, and I could easily have taken those advanced classes had I chosen to do so.

Ohav Sholaum was not the only synagogue that I attended in those years, so I had yardsticks by which to measure that shul, making it sadly deficient in my eyes. During my college years, I accompanied Mother to High Holiday services at Congregation Beth Hillel on 181st Street. This congregation, too, had been established originally by German-Jewish refugees in the late 1930's. Mother might have been drawn to Beth Hillel by its rabbi, Hugo Stransky, who had begun his illustrious rabbinical career some thirty years earlier in Czechoslovakia. Beth Hillel and Rabbi Stransky evidently provided the spiritual uplift and intellectual stimulation that Mother found lacking at Ohav Sholaum.

On several occasions, I also attended High Holyday services with Grandmother at the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) at 122d Street and Broadway. This required a walk down Dyckman Street to the IRT station on Nagle Avenue, up the steep flight of stairs to the platform, catching the Broadway IRT train to 125th Street. Then, again, we would walk down the stairs to Broadway and up the hill from the subway station to 122nd Street. After arriving in the auditorium where the services were conducted, Grandmother and I sat together, always at the rear, even though, as a Conservative congregation, the Seminary did not compel its women worshippers to sit in the back of the hall. Perhaps it was a lifetime of conditioning that led Grandmother to sit there, perhaps it was her natural diffidence, her reluctance to call attention to herself.

The services at the JTS were conducted by the faculty, with participation by the students, and led by the two stars: the Seminary chancellor, Dr. Louis Finkelstein, and the senior professor, Louis Ginzberg. Ginzberg was revered as a teacher and as the author, decades earlier, of the pioneering multi-volume work, *Legends of the Jews*.<sup>162</sup> The two men sat together on the *bimah*, both in dark suits, but Dr. Finkelstein wore a black homburg on his head while Dr.

Ginzberg had on a black or white *kipa*, a regular skullcap. Rabbi Finkelstein was tall, carrying himself erectly and with great dignity, like the famous Torah scholar that he was; Rabbi Ginzberg was shorter, more of a scrappy type, though yielding nothing to Dr. Finkelstein in learning or in scholarly reputation. The services were orderly and dignified; no one wandered the aisles to chat with other congregants. When Grandmother and I left after the service had ended, I always felt elevated by the experience.

One year, Grandmother and I attended *Succoth* (the autumn harvest festival) services at the Seminary, and afterwards participated with the other worshippers in taking a midday meal in the *succah* (outdoor booth), set up in the courtyard of the institution. The long table, seating perhaps sixty persons on each side, was beautifully decorated with white linen table cloth and napkins, china and crystal; boughs of evergreens were attached to the walls, and the open roof was elaborately hung with greens, fruits, gourds and other vegetables. Never before had I sat in such a *succah*, nor have I done so since.

Sad to say, my Bar Mitzvah marked for me, as for many other Jewish American youngsters, an end, not a beginning. Instead of attending services every Shabbat, as I had in the months before the Bar Mitzvah, my synagogue attendance became more infrequent as years rolled by, coming down, eventually, to the irreducible minimum for most American Jews: the High Holydays. Perhaps if someone else in the family had been a regular synagogue-goer, I would have been inspired to go more often. But no one else in the immediate family habitually attended synagogue services on *Shabbat*, nor did I.

Growing up in Inwood, I did not fully understand that I was being raised in a ghetto of sorts, the German-Jewish community of Washington Heights/Inwood. I took it for granted that all Jews were like me and my Jewish public school classmates and those with whom I attended Ohav Sholaum. Only gradually in my early teen years did I realize that my little island of German-Jewish culture was only that. I came to understand that the dominant Jewish subculture in America, even in New York, was that of Jews who had arrived in this country in the great tidal wave of immigration at the turn of the twentieth century. The differences, once I became aware of them, seemed trifling, and yet at the same time huge, expressing themselves not only in the forms of worship,

as described earlier in this chapter, but in culture, in language and entertainment and, yes, in the very foods we ate. On the radio I would hear Menashe Skulnick, Gertrude Berg and Molly Picon, stars of the Yiddish theater and descendants of that earlier wave of Jewish immigration, cracking “in” jokes about cabbage soup and *borscht* (beet soup), bagels, *kreplach* (dumplings) and *cholent* (Shabbat stew, cooked before sundown on Friday). I didn’t “get it.” To me, these were acquired tastes, in some instances tastes that I would never acquire.

As in so many other instances around the world where one culture clashed with another, language was the sticking point. I knew that other Jews spoke Yiddish; in fact, in the 1940’s, many Jews still spoke Yiddish at home. Not my grandparents, though; Yiddish was more alien to them than French or Italian. In my grandmother’s girlhood, Yiddish had been a forbidden language at the dinnertable. Her father, himself but one generation removed from those for whom Yiddish had been the *mamaloschen* (mother tongue), could understand those who

*dismissed Yiddish as an unruly bastardized folk jargon, the medium of ecstatic Chasidic mystics, a barrier to the Enlightenment or, worst of all, the language of chin-wagging women.*<sup>163</sup>

Expressing the feelings of the German-Jewish haute-bourgeoisie in the early 20th century, the painter Max Liebermann wrote:

*Let me use Berlin expressions as much as you like, but neither incorrect German nor Jewish German. . . Since I’m a dyed-in-the-wool Jew, Jewish words in the German language make me angry. At most I may allow nebbisch [jerk] and meshugge [crazy one] because there are no German words for them.*<sup>164</sup>

In my own childhood, I had heard Grandfather use German-Yiddish expressions at the dinner table; this chapter begins with one such saying. I also knew the word “goy” (non-Jew) from hearing him chant, absent-mindedly, “oy, oy, oy, *schicker ist der goy*” (“the Gentile is a drunk”), the same words I had used as a 3-year-old in Paris.<sup>165</sup> But most of the Yiddish vocabulary was new and strange to me. I was 11 or 12 before I heard the word “*tochis*” (buttocks). Until I went to high school, I had not heard the words “*shikse*” and “*shayketz*” (the feminine and masculine forms of the word for Gentile, which share a root of the word for “dirty”). These words

sounded coarse and vulgar in the mouths of those who used them. I didn't have to ask their meaning; it was obvious from the context. It was clear, too, that they were crass putdowns, and I made up my mind early on never to use those words myself, even when I was dating girls who were not Jewish. In later years, I have heard Christian women, married to Jews, refer to themselves as "*shiksese*"; to me, that self-abasement is even worse.

As Jews in Germany had looked down their noses at their country-bumpkin cousins from the East and tried to distance themselves from them, the shoe was on the other foot here in America. Second- and third-generation Americans, originally from Eastern Europe, scorned the recent arrivals from Germany as Johnny-come-latelies who didn't know the ropes and were slow to learn them. As Jews referred to Christians by the catch-all word, *goyim*, and individual Gentile men and women as *shayketzes* and *shiksese*, Jews of Eastern European descent sometimes applied those terms also to German Jews. The implication was that they weren't "real Jews."

Back in the old country, Eastern European Jews had another word for their German cousins, "*Yekke*," thought to be derived from the German word "*Geck*," meaning, approximately, "conceited fool." Others trace its origin to the German word for jacket, referring to the insistence of German Jewish men on wearing their coats even when the occasion called for less formal dress. Whatever its origin, the word, spoken as if spat out from the corner of the mouth, survived on this side of the ocean. On more than one occasion, my father-in-law said it of me.

Calvin Trillin's father, Abe, shared the older arrivals' intuitive dislike of German Jews:

*My father, as he would have put it, wasn't crazy about them. At the center of it, I think, was a feeling that the refugees he came across were simply not becoming Americanized at a pace commensurate with what they owed this country and what made good sense.<sup>166</sup>*

Lowenstein writes of the conflict between the new wave of German-Jewish immigrants and the older, more acculturated Jews who had arrived at the turn of the century that:

*The older Jewish population, mainly of Eastern European origin, could not understand why the refugees clung to German. On the one hand, the*

*presence of these conspicuous speakers of a foreign language seemed to place the American status of the native Jews in jeopardy. On the other hand, the inability of the Germans to speak Yiddish (indeed their ill-disguised contempt for the language) seemed to many American Jews to show how un-Jewish the refugees were..*<sup>167</sup>

Expressing the hostility of the second-generation Jew for the new arrivals, Abe Trillin complained to his son that the man with whom he shared a hospital room spoke only in German to his visitors:

*But if your mother had been in the hospital and you went to visit her, you'd have spoken to her in Yiddish,' I said.*

*I don't care what you say,' he said. 'They should speak English. This is America.'*<sup>168</sup>

As a teenager, I shared Abe Trillin's reaction on hearing German spoken in public. While walking around Inwood in the 1940's and 1950's and overhearing passers-by speaking to each other in German, I would clench my teeth and say to myself, "Speak English, dammit!"

Because their parents spoke heavily-accented English or no English at all and had other Old World ways, many second-generation American Jews felt that theirs was a home of suffocating other-ness, to be escaped from at the earliest opportunity. I did not share those feelings. Neither my family's accents nor their other "German" ways troubled me. Far from it. Having absorbed over the years the myths that I had so often heard from Grandmother, I had the greatest respect for my mother and grandparents. There was no reason to flee their culture, no reason to discard that heritage.

Back in Germany, many of the urbanized Jewish bourgeoisie disdained the new *Ostjüdische* immigrants, the Jews originally from Poland and points east. From their comfortable homes in Berlin's West End, they had watched in dismay as the newcomers, most of them in dire poverty, dressed in the strange garb of the Chassidim, flooded into Berlin, just as, a few decades later, the prosperous Jews of German origin in Manhattan would be horrified at the unending stream of immigrants from Eastern Europe into the streets of lower Manhattan at the turn of the century. The same *noblesse oblige* that impelled the more prosperous of Berlin's Jewry to extend a helping

hand to the new arrivals from the East drove their counterparts in Manhattan to assist the newly-arrived immigrants in the Lower East Side, without, it is safe to say, dispelling the contempt that they felt for these families and the fear that the anti-Semitic feelings engendered in non-Jews by this wave of immigrants would extend to them as well.<sup>169</sup>

The antipathy between German Jews and those of Eastern European origin survived among Jews of my mother's generation. In her last days, Mother was on the receiving end of it. When, in the weeks before her death, she moved into the Hebrew Home in West Hartford, Connecticut, she was shunned by the other patients. She felt that they were hostile to her because of her German-accented English. Perhaps it was a question of social class as well. I hold, with Professor Henry Higgins in the Lerner and Loewe musical "My Fair Lady," that "these verbal class distinctions by now should be antique," but they are alive and well among older Jews. Fortunately, in my children's generation, these distinctions appear to have lost their significance.

Once I became aware of the differences among Jews, I was baffled at their persistence. The Jewish community, in America as in "the old country," seemed riven by ancient conflicts between Zionists and non-Zionists, between Orthodox, Conservative and Reform, this kashruth certifier and that one, the *Chasidim* and *Mitnagdim* (those whose religion was driven by emotion and those for whom reason was paramount), and, among the *Chasidim*, between followers of this rebbe and that rebbe, this ritual and not that ritual, and so on. Just as disputes "in the family" can be more intense and longer-lasting than clashes with outsiders, so it sometimes seems that Jews nurse their grievances against other Jews more zealously than their conflicts with those of other faiths. Every Jew, when confronted with this paradox, would agree that, as a tiny, persecuted minority, we need to present a united front against the dominant culture, but then, like the Martins and the Coys of song, they "carry on the feud just like before."

Perhaps it was these distinctions, or the way I saw myself in relation to others active in Jewish communal life, that caused me to fail in my efforts to reach out and participate in Jewish organizations and then to become indifferent to such activities. In that regard, my mother and grandparents had not blazed a path for me to follow. Grandfather late in life developed an interest in

Jewish music and was among the founders of the association of Jewish musicologists, but he had no interest in or connection with the organized Jewish community. Grandmother and Mother never joined synagogue sisterhoods or Hadassah or ORT or any of the other organizations that draw Jewish women. These were simply not a part of their world. As a young teenager, I had met boys at summer camp who knew each other from AZA (the Zionist youth organization) and girls who were members of BBG (B'nai B'rith Girls). This was a mystery language to me; I did not at that time even know what the initials stood for, and felt excluded by my ignorance of that world.

To close that seeming gap, I decided at age 15 or 16 to join such an organization. Perhaps, I thought, this would be a way of meeting and making friends with other Jewish teenagers. Acting on that decision, I went to a meeting of Young Judea, the youth arm of the Zionist Organization of America, at the Washington Heights branch of the Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA). The meeting, presided over by a girl my age, seemed to consist of endless palaver, with no actions taken, no decisions made. No one spoke to me, I spoke to no one. I left before the meeting ended. Had I been more mature, I might have said to myself, "Give it another chance; the next time may be different." But I had no patience for it, again felt the outsider, and never returned.

In later years, I resumed my efforts to "fit in," but, a few satisfying experiences aside, I have not drawn on the organized Jewish community for emotional nourishment. I have never belonged to a synagogue Men's Club and would not now rush to join one. I have felt alienated all my life from Jews-as-a-body. The "virus" that infected me in my teens, that ingrained idea that I am somehow "different" from them or they from me, has never left me. Perhaps they speak a language that I cannot hear or decode, or send out vibrations that I do not receive, and perhaps this is the cause for my sense of alienation. What signals was I sending out that subtly or not-so-subtly undermined those efforts? No one has ever taken me aside to answer that question. Our rabbis say that Judaism is a communal religion; that is why a *minyan* (ten persons) is required before public prayer can begin. By that standard, I am not an observant Jew. Nevertheless, I have come over the years to accept that I can be a committed Jew, leading a richly Jewish

spiritual life, even though I have for the most part been unable to feel at home in the Jewish community.

I began this chapter with the Yiddish phrase, “*Schwer tzu zayn a Yid*,” “it’s tough to be a Jew.” In America, it was tough not because Jews were persecuted but for the opposite reason. The very freedoms that Jews encountered here, their ability to “disappear” into the general population, could make it hard to be both an American and a Jew. As a boy growing up in New York, I was not immune to the pull of the Gentile world and its temptations, so alluring to young children.

This was particularly true at Christmastime, the time of year when Jewish kids felt the greatest ambivalence: they were Jewish, to be sure, but they were still drawn to the tinsel, the glitter, the surge of warm feeling. December was, indisputably, the *Christmas* season, and not the “holiday season,” as we call it today. Each December an impressive Christmas tree, with dozens of painted wooden ornaments and bright red, green, blue and yellow lights, was erected in the Lt. William Tighe Triangle, the small triangle formed by the intersection of Riverside Drive, Dyckman Street and Broadway. At the base of the tree was a wooden crèche, with carved wooden figures depicting the Holy Family, the animals in the manger and the Magi. There was no similar public recognition of the Jewish holiday, Chanukah, no public displays of the oversize menorah that we see today, for example, on the Ellipse behind the White House. One might see small electric menorahs in apartment windows and larger ones in front of the synagogues but, on public property, never.

Starting at Thanksgiving, every shopping “Main Street” in Upper Manhattan’s neighborhoods from 168th Street to 207th Street was brightly lit with thousands of Christmas lights. Dyckman Street was lit from its western end at Broadway to its eastern end on Nagel Avenue, and most of the stores gaudily decorated with the Christmas theme, with frosted “snow” on the store windows and lights framing the windows. In those days, while Inwood residents might travel downtown to see the Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center and the holiday displays in the grand specialty shops and department stores on Fifth Avenue, the stores on Dyckman Street fully met the shopper’s needs; there was no need to go downtown for gift-buying. The street was crowded with shoppers, bracing

themselves against the icy blasts off the river to get their shopping done before the holiday.

In our schools, carols were sung at the annual Christmas assembly and Clement Moore's "'Twas the Night before Christmas" was read aloud. It would have been unthinkable to ask to be excused from attending the Christmas assembly because you were Jewish and didn't celebrate Christmas. Equally far-fetched would have been a public recitation of the Chanukah story, the saga of the Maccabees' victory over the Greeks. I was swayed by the beauty of the Christmas carols but uneasy about singing the words. As a result, like thousands of other little Jewish children, I "compromised": I sang all the songs except "Silent Night," with its references to "yon Virgin Mother and Child." You could sing "Adeste Fidelis," though, because it was in Latin and nobody understood the words. If that hymn were sung in English, you could sing it almost to the end, and then move your lips noiselessly for the concluding words, "Christ the Lord." These were the minute and casuistic accommodations that Jewish boys and girls learned to make at a very young age.

At Christmastime, the classrooms were decorated with wreaths, snowmen, angels with haloes and Santa Claus and his reindeer. There was no Rudolph, though: the perennially-popular Christmas song, "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" was written in 1949, when I was already in high school. Nor were there songs about the miracle of Chanukah or about dreidels. To sing such songs would have felt strange to me and would have made me distinctly self-conscious.

The last day before the schools closed for the Christmas and New Year recess was marked by the traditional gift-giving to the homeroom teacher. There was no rule requiring it, but it had always been done. Most parents, if they could afford it, had their children bring a beautifully wrapped present. On that last day of school, the teacher's desk would be covered with gifts. One could see from the shape of the packages that the most popular gift was perfume, or rather, eau de Cologne, perfume being far too expensive. These gifts were available from places like the Merit Pharmacy, next to the Alpine Theater, so it required no great shopping adventure to buy them. To spare the feelings of those children who hadn't brought gifts or whose gifts were not quite up to par, the teachers did not

open the packages in the classroom. Instead, she brought them home, perhaps to recycle them as her own gifts to someone else.

Chanukah developed as a December holiday in part to offset for Jewish children the allure of Christmas. In our family, we celebrated Chanukah at my grandparents' apartment, usually on the first night. Mother, Ben and I arrived there with shopping bags full of presents, to be joined there by uncles, aunts and cousins. One Chanukah, Grandmother and I, like characters out of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," trudged in the early evening darkness from my apartment to hers. Muffled in our heavy winter coats and hats, we climbed up Henshaw Street, the steepest street linking Dyckman Street to Riverside Drive. To light the way, Grandmother carried in front of her a family heirloom: a tin lantern, with its beveled glass panels, the candle flickering inside. It made me feel exotic to use this antiquated form of illumination on a New York City street, in the 1940's!

When we arrived at Grandmother's apartment, the traditional menorah, its freshly-polished brass gleaming, its flanking lions rampant, stood as it always did on the Victorian piano in the dining room. Next to it would be the Jerusalem artichoke, spread out in the water in the cerulean blue Val St. Lambert bowl, a sure sign, even more than the menorah, of the arrival of the Chanukah season, and, piled around the menorah and the Jerusalem artichoke, Grandmother's presents. On the table were the white china teapot, the cups on their saucers, and Grandmother's baked butter cookies and *pfefferniisse* (anise-flavored cookies). When everyone had arrived, we gathered at the piano to light the first candle on the menorah, chant the blessings and sing the Chanukah songs. As a child, I stood in front of the menorah with my brother and my cousins, the elders behind us. Grandfather seemingly enjoyed these family parties, but, perhaps because of his lack of a Jewish education, he was subdued, not insisting on playing a central role as paterfamilias and unable to join in chanting the blessings or in the singing. As for me, standing in front of the menorah, I felt confident of my place in the family, unaware of the tensions and animosities that beset the adults standing around me.

Once the last refrain of *Maoz Tzur* (freely, "Rock of Ages") had ended, the happy confusion began, as we emptied our shopping bags and identified which package was to go to whom. Arms reached across other arms in every direction, conveying the present

to the one for whom it was intended. There was no choosing of lots to decide who was to give a present to whom, so that each person need buy and give only one gift. No, everyone got a present from everyone else. At least, that was true for us children. There was always at least one gift that delighted us, whether it was Tinker Toys, Lincoln Logs, a baseball game or a new book. We would sit on the floor, among a forest of adult legs, tear open the giftboxes and immediately begin to play with the new toys. After all the gifts had been opened and the wrapping paper and ribbons discarded, we sat down, all of us around the dining table, to a Chanukah dinner. At dinnertime throughout the year, Grandmother sometimes served potato pancakes as a side dish, but *latkes*, potato pancakes fried in deep fat, were not the centerpiece of our Chanukah dinner as they were for other American Jewish families.

So, “*schmer tzu zayn a Yid*” in America? Not today, not for our family, not for me. As I said earlier, I have not been comfortable in the Jewish communal world, but aside from the few boyhood incidents I described earlier, it has not been a burden to be a Jew. Now, instead of being something you’d rather keep hidden and not discuss, it’s “in” to be Jewish. The President and the First Lady each year light a Chanukah menorah on the Ellipse alongside the Christmas tree. American Jewish culture has entered the mainstream of American stage, film and television and books. Public schools in major metropolitan areas close down on the Jewish High Holydays. In 2000, an Orthodox Jew, Joseph I. Lieberman, was nominated to be Vice President on the national Democratic Party ticket. Who would have thought that we’d see that happen in our lifetimes? Perhaps in the reader’s lifetime, if not in mine, a Jew will be elected president!

These days, children and adults are proud to be Jews and proud to be identified as Jews, proud to wear their *kipot* at school or at work. Orthodox men display the fringes of their *tzitzit* (men’s ritual undergarment) outside their secular garments. Shopping in the kosher supermarkets in suburban Maryland, I see the young Orthodox Jewish women in their long-sleeved dresses and head coverings. Instead of feeling shame or anger as I would have when younger (“Why don’t they look like other Americans?”), I am happy that this saving remnant, men and women, holds fast to Jewish tradition. My grandchildren, too, enthusiastically celebrate their

Jewishness. They take pride in it, and I too feel that pride. Grandchildren Talia, Jonah and Ezra have all benefited from a Jewish day school education.

There is one more difference that the passage of sixty-five years has wrought. My grandchildren can, if they choose to do so, walk past St. Elizabeth's R. C. Church on Montrose Road in Rockville without being pelted by iceballs. Now, *that's* progress!

## EARLY SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

As adults, we often make a conscious effort to remember “meaningful” conversations or events, to put them in our storehouse of “long-term memory.” Even so, our best intentions go awry: when we try in later years to recall those meaningful conversations or events, we cannot. Meanwhile, life’s minutiae—a peculiar taste, an exotic or unpleasant scent, an elegant gesture, a meaningful touch—these we may pay no attention to at the time but they remain as memories for a lifetime, setting off an endless chain of other memories and associations. Think of Marcel Proust and his *madeleine* cookies.

It is just such a detail that stirs memories of my year as a four-year-old at the Stern Kindergarten. Edith Stern ran her kindergarten out of her ground-floor apartment on Riverside Drive, just three buildings away from Grandmother’s place. With perhaps ten other little boys and girls, I spent the day as pre-kindergarteners did then and still do today, in games, painting and crafts, with frequent visits to the playground at the corner of Payson Avenue and Dyckman Street, or into Fort Tryon Park. Specifically, the lasting memory is of two colors, electric shades of blue and red. In a crafts exercise there, we children were given shiny strips of metallic paper and asked to weave them, over and under, into a little mat, about six inches square. I turned those strips this way and that to catch the sunlight reflected in the glistening electric blues and reds, and when I had finished making the mat, showed it off proudly to Grandmother and Mother.

I have only one other memory of Stern Kindergarten: our naptimes. Every day, when lunch was over and the plates cleared, the shades were drawn and chamberpots were spotted at intervals around the room. On the teacher's command, ten little boys and girls squatted over those chamber pots, making in unison the noises of an excretory orchestra. When we finished what we had to do on the chamber pots, the staff swooped in to pick them up and empty them. Then canvas cots were unfolded and lined up in the darkened room, and we took our afternoon naps.

The following year I entered kindergarten at P.S. 52 on Academy Street. This was one of a number of Manhattan school buildings of 1920's vintage, probably built from the same plans: dark brownish-maroon brick, limestone facings around the windows and the main doors, the name of the school incised in gothic letters in the archway overhead, crenellated turrets on each side. The original Inwood school, a three-story red brick structure dating back to the 1870's, became an annex to the newer and larger building.

The interior of P.S. 52 was a gloomy affair, with cement floors, white-tiled walls and wooden wainscoting stained dark brown. Suffusing everything was a strong odor that I took to be urine but turned out to be the Lysol disinfectant solution used by the cleaning staff. In my nose, and hence wherever in my brain olfactory memories are stored, the smell of Lysol is forever associated with P.S. 52.

The classrooms were identical to each other and probably to most of the classrooms in other schools of that vintage elsewhere in New York City. They were laid out parallel to the corridor, with one entry door in front, at the teacher's desk, another at the rear. Along the long wall between the two doors were closets with sliding doors. Here in cold weather we hung our mackinaw coats and stowed our galoshes. Arrayed in columns from the front of the classroom to the rear were the old wooden desks and seats in their ornately-worked black cast iron frames, bolted to the floor. Each seat and seatback formed a unit with the desk of the pupil behind. Every desk had an inkwell in the upper-right-hand corner and grooves scored into the upper edge of the desk for pens and pencils. Under the surface of the desk was a shelf for storing textbooks and composition books when we were not using them. In later models, the desktop was hinged so that, by lifting it, you could get access to the entire storage space. Every inch of the

desktop was covered with initials and other messages that successive waves of students had gouged or inked into the wood. Under the desk, or under the seat, were the hardened wads of chewing gum which countless numbers of children had pressed against the wood as they slid into their seats before class began. You could be sent down to the principal's office for chewing gum during class.

The columns of desks were paired, two students sitting side-by-side, each with an aisle at his side. On the outer wall were high multi-paned windows which could be opened only by catching the upper one with the tip of a long pole and pulling the pole downward. In the left corner of the room stood the American flag, golden-fringed, with its forty-eight stars. Two more were to be added when Hawaii and Alaska were admitted to the Union, but that came only years after I had finished elementary school. Next to the flag the blackboard stretched across the entire front wall behind the teacher's desk. Sometimes it was on tracks, with one section behind the other, so as to create even more blackboard space. Above the blackboard, invariably, was the Gilbert Stuart portrait of George Washington, the unfinished one in which the grim-visaged Father of Our Country seems to emerge from a fluffy white cloud, and another portrait, of the sad-faced Abraham Lincoln. Written across the top of the blackboard were the letters of the alphabet, upper case and lower, in flowing Spencerian script.

Our schoolday began with the Pledge of Allegiance. Facing the American flag at the front of the room, we said the Pledge aloud, in unison, as we stood next to our desks, our right hand over the heart. We recited the pledge as it was originally written: "One nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." Only years later did Congress ordain that the words "under God" be inserted after "one nation."

After the Pledge of Allegiance, the classroom "monitors" carried out their daily chores. There were blackboard monitors, whose task it was to wipe the blackboards clean; the pole monitors, charged with wielding the long window pole to open and close the windows; and the eraser monitors, who daily went to the roof of the school to beat the chalky erasers against the building wall to get them clean. This was a choice assignment, because the eraser monitors could dawdle on their way up to or down from the roof,

and every minute outside the classroom was precious. I was never a "monitor" of any kind.

Once the chores were done, the real work began. In first grade, we learned to read, do our sums and practice our penmanship. Our first-grade primer was "Peter and Peggy." The opening lines were not very different from those in the primers used today: "Peter is a boy. Peggy is a girl. Peter has a dog. Peggy has a cat. The dog's name is Spot. The cat's name is Tom." On the last page of the book, which we reached in the closing days of the term, was the word "electric." As a six-year-old, I was surprised that such a long word would be included in a first-grade reader, and pleased with myself that I could read it without difficulty.

The daily penmanship lesson began with stretching exercises, in which we made great swooping and rotating motions with our arms, to relax our arms and hands for the task ahead. Then, on the teacher's command, each pupil took up a steel-nibbed pen, dipped it into the inkwell and put pen to paper, making great arcing swooshes across the page of the composition book. First, we inscribed a convex arc across the top of the page, then another arc below it, concave, the two arcs intersecting at each end, and repeated the process over and over. That was an excellent way of teaching flexibility to the wrist, essential for the expressive flowing hand which was deemed the most beautiful way to write. We mastered the letters of the alphabet, learning that each letter had its specific height: those that reached the first line were the vowels and the loops of the b, c, d; those that reached the second line were the loops of the f and the l, and so on.

In those days, the New York City school system rightly placed great emphasis on the study of geography. Attached to the frame of the blackboard was a rolled-up map of the world, which the teacher pulled down, as one pulls down a window shade, for our geography lesson. We learned quickly that the countries colored pink on the map were British colonies, the green ones were French-owned and the purple-colored ones Portuguese. It seemed to me as I stared at that map that most of Africa was pink and green. Large parts of the rest of the world were also pink; in those years it could still be said that "the sun never sets on the British Empire." That changed in the two decades after the end of the war, when almost every one of those formerly pink, green and purple-colored nations fought for and gained its independence. On these roll-up maps, published in

the 1920's, there were also white patches which have disappeared from the newer maps. These were the *terrae incognitae*, the last areas of the world still to be explored and mapped: large portions of Antarctica, the high Pamirs (the mountainous area north of Kashmir between Afghanistan and Tibet), and the farthest reaches of the Amazon. Only in December 2000 did I read that, with the aid of satellite mapping, the source of the Amazon River had finally been pinpointed in the mountains of southeastern Peru.

When the teacher rolled the map down and tapped with her long wooden pointer at a spot on that map, we were expected to identify that country and its capital city and to know the country's major exports, as well as the chief rivers and mountain ranges of the world. We also had to know the states, their capital cities and their identifying monikers. New York, we knew, was the Empire State, Pennsylvania the Keystone State and Ohio the Buckeye State. It was harder to remember the nicknames for Idaho, Nevada and Colorado.

We became familiar with the important cities as well. Because at that time a single industry was dominant in many cities, we had to pair the cities with the industries they were known for. Hartford was the Insurance City, Waterbury was Brass City, Akron was the Rubber City, Pittsburgh the Iron City and so on. How irrelevant those labels have become in the last twenty years! With the advent of global markets and global competition, the old smelters and assembly lines have been shut down, the mills converted to elderly housing or incubation sites for small businesses, or, as in Waterbury, torn down to make room for regional malls.

The study of geography was largely a matter of memorization. I had a good head for rote learning and was interested in the subject, perhaps because I had arrived in the United States from elsewhere and was keen to know of the larger world. I could spit out the most trivial details about countries, states, cities and other geographical features. That must have made me insufferable to my classmates.

Most children began first grade at age six, as they do today. But in the chaotic years before and during the war it was not uncommon for older children, recent immigrants to this country and not yet fluent in English, to begin the school year in lower grades regardless of their age. It was the enlightened policy of the Board of Education to move these children through to their proper grade as rapidly as their acquisition of the language and other skills

permitted. So a little ten-year-old girl, after being placed on arrival in this country in the first grade, would move to second grade, spend three months there and three months in third grade, reaching her appropriate grade level midway through the spring term, or sooner.

Learning English presented no difficulty to me. My speech habits were not yet fully formed when I arrived in America at age three. Once we came to this country, my parents encouraged me to speak English at home. That was not a problem for me or for them, since they spoke it fluently. As a result, by the time I entered the first grade, at age 6, English was my first language, and there was no need to hold me back because of a lack of facility in English speaking, reading or writing. In later years I came to regret the emphasis at home on speaking English, because I would have liked to have retained my fluency in German. In the push to speak English, I neglected the spoken German. I could understand it fully, but lost the confidence to speak it.

In my elementary school years, religion played a more important role than it does now. Since the Supreme Court had not yet spoken firmly against the intrusion of religion into public school education, the line between the religious and the secular was blurred, not only at Christmastime but the year 'round. Many school districts throughout the country, facing a shortage of lay teachers, brought nuns into the public school classrooms to teach. That was not done in New York City. Still, there were practices that today would be seen as egregious breaches of the "wall of separation between church and state." Perhaps in keeping with the wartime mood, assemblies at our elementary schools began and ended with a hymn, mostly of the martial variety. We started with the doxology:

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow  
Praise Him all creatures here below  
Him serve with love ye Heavenly Host  
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.*

and then moved on to other traditional hymns: "Onward, Christian Soldiers," "God of Our Fathers," "Faith of Our Fathers," "Lead On, O King Eternal!" and the like. I squirmed when these hymns were sung, especially the Doxology, and lip-synched the words without actually singing them. I kept silent entirely when the final line was sung. We Jewish boys and girls would complain to each

other about having to sing these hymns, but I don't remember that I or anyone else ever protested to the teacher that, as Jews, we should not be required to sing them, nor were we excused from singing them.

The pupils at P.S. 52 reflected the population of the Inwood neighborhood. They were mostly Catholic, mainly Irish with a sprinkling of Italians and Germans, and many Jews as well. There must have been Protestants living in our area because we walked past their churches, even though no one ever seemed to enter or leave them. Nor did we know personally any little Episcopalians or Lutherans, let alone Baptists or Disciples of Christ.

To accommodate the Church's religious education requirements, Catholic schoolchildren were "released" from public school early on Thursday afternoons to attend catechism classes. Jewish children, if they went to Hebrew School at all, went only after the conclusion of the regular school day. On those released-time Thursday afternoons, with no Catholic boys and girls in the classroom, only the sprinkling of Jewish children remained to be taught, and the teacher would be reluctant to cover material that she would only have to repeat the next day when the Catholic schoolchildren had returned to their seats. Mostly, those Thursday afternoons were turned into "study halls"; we were allowed to work at our own pace on our homework for the following day.

After three years at P.S. 52, I moved in fourth grade to P.S. 152 on Nagel Avenue, spending the next three years at that school. This was a much longer walk for me; instead of the two blocks I walked to P.S. 52, I had a ten-block walk to the new school.

At P.S. 152, as at P.S. 52, pupils were on their own at lunchtime. There was not, to my recollection, a school lunchroom and there were no subsidized lunches as there are today. We did receive a mid-morning ration of milk and cookies. For most children, the absence of a cafeteria or lunchroom was not a problem; they lived within easy walking distance of the school and their mothers were there when they came home at noon. Since no one was home for Ben and me at lunchtime, Mother arranged for us to take our noontime meals at Goldstrom's Delicatessen, on Nagel Avenue near the IRT station, two blocks from the school. Five days a week we sat at a small table across the narrow aisle from the display case, and Mr. Goldstrom put before us bowls of pea soup laced with kosher knockwurst, sandwiches (roast beef or corned beef), bottles

of Dr. Brown's cream soda and, for each of us, a halvah bar for dessert. That was heaven!

My first two years at P.S. 152 coincided with the last two years of the war. That colored much of what we learned. In our Physical Education class, there was no instruction in basketball or volleyball or any other attempt to develop our athletic skills. Instead we were placed in the hands of a maniacal teacher who doubled as a drill instructor. To a scratchy recording of "Stars and Stripes Forever" and other marches of John Philip Sousa, she had us marching and countermarching around the gym by twos, by fours and then the grand march, eight abreast, from the stage to the front of the hall, she in the van, facing us, pedalling backwards furiously to maintain the distance between herself and the "corps of cadets" and yelling instructions at us over the blare of the music: "Cast off by twos". . . "cast off by fours" . . . and, finally, "all together grand march down the center."

The Music Appreciation class was equally unorthodox. For that class we took seats in the auditorium and listened while the music teacher introduced us to the magical world of classical music, or at least her limited view of it. She would set the large 78 rpm record on the spindle, crank up the Victrola, and then delicately place the needle on the rim of the record. It was not, however, the music of Beethoven, Mozart, Brahms and Haydn and the other classical composers that we heard. Perhaps these works were considered too difficult, or perhaps it was that these composers were German and Austrian and we were then at war with these countries. Grandfather at the dinner table would speak rhapsodically of Mozart's music, but I was in high school before I heard his music and that of the other great German composers.

Instead, we were asked to appreciate music now heard only rarely in the concert hall or on recordings: Edward McDowell's "To a Water Lily" and "To a Wild Rose," Edvard Grieg's "Peer Gynt Suite," Percy Grainger's "Country Gardens" and Paderewski's Minuet in G. To remember the music for the end-of-term test, it helped if you could sing the words which generations of schoolchildren had attached to the music. Thus, "Amaryllis, written by Ghys, was written in the Cou-ou-ourt of France." Peer Gynt: "Morning is dawning and Peer Gynt is yawning and Grieg is about to begin." Dvorak's Humoresque: "We encourage constipation while the train is in the station." This last obviously went from one

pupil to another; it wasn't what the teacher taught us as a mnemonic for the music.

My class in painting proved far more instructive. The teacher, Mrs. Rosenthal, gave me the encouragement I needed, and the school furnished the necessary supplies at no cost to us. I painted in oils two canvases that I remember to this day. The first was copied from a postcard: in front of a brick wall, a little Dutch boy, the peasant cap on his head, wooden shoes on his feet, holds in cupped hands a bright red apple. The second, a *plein air* landscape of the Cloisters, I sketched on a school trip to Fort Tryon Park. Sadly, those paintings were eventually consigned to the dustbin, as were so many other objects from my childhood.

The pedagogical approach at that time, and perhaps still today, was to adopt a "class project" that would last an entire term. It was to be tied in as far as possible to our reading and other studies. So, in fifth grade, the theme was "Light Through the Ages." We studied light from prehistoric times to the incandescent lamp and tried our hands at molding oil lamps out of clay. The following year, the theme was "The Law." For that project, we did "Trial by Jury" as a class play, and learned Gilbert and Sullivan's patter song:

*For today in this arena,  
summoned by a stern subpoena,  
Edwin sued by Angelina  
shortly will appear.*

We also took a class trip to the New York Civil Courts building, sitting quietly in the gallery to hear the testimony in a mundane civil case. A woman had entrusted her fur coat to the checkroom at an elegant New York restaurant. When she returned after dinner to claim it, the coat was gone. Was the restaurant responsible? Probably not! But we did not stay to find out.

Of my classmates at P.S. 152, I remember only a few. Among them were:

. . .Toshio Harada, a Japanese-American boy who was taller, stronger and more mature than the rest of us. His mother owned a gift shop on Nagel Avenue, selling chopsticks, paper lanterns and other such Oriental merchandise. While thousands of West Coast Japanese-Americans were interned in the deserts of the Western states for the duration of the war, the Nisei and Sansei living on the East Coast were not considered a threat. Toshio and his family

carried on with their lives as they had before the war. His classmates so respected him that in 1944, even as the war raged in the Pacific, they elected him class president.

. . . Florence Weinstein, a blue-eyed strawberry blonde with delicate Meissen-doll features. I had experienced the first pangs of puppy love in the summer of 1943 at Camp Petersville. Now, in the following school year, I transferred my affections, at least in my fantasies, to Florence, following her home to her apartment building on Nagel Avenue in hopes that she would later emerge, so that I could run into her “by chance.” Alas, she never did. Perhaps the fantasies I had built around her were better than what might have taken their place.

. . . Freddy Rein, destined to die prematurely from infantile paralysis, or polio. At age eleven or twelve, death is an abstraction to most children. A grandparent may have died, or, as in my case, a parent. That might be expected; after all, they were adults. But, to have a classmate die brought home to us the evident brutality, the seeming randomness, of our lives. Today, it is rare for a child to contract polio, and even rarer to die from it, but in those years, just after the war, it was not at all unusual. Salk and Sabin had not yet done their pioneering work in the development of a polio vaccine. To be struck down by polio meant death or long periods in an iron lung, a lifetime of restriction to a wheelchair and years of arduous physical therapy. We were aware of the dangers of polio. We knew that President Roosevelt had been infected by the virus as a young adult and that, as much as he tried not to let it limit him, he had to make allowances for his disability. We had also seen photographs of children our age, confined to the iron lung which did their breathing for them, only their heads showing outside of the bulky apparatus. We saved our dimes to contribute to the March of Dimes. Still, we were not prepared when the disease struck Freddy Rein and killed him. Today, six decades later, I see him in my mind’s eye, a happy kid with a mischievous glint in his eyes, fated to be struck down before reaching adulthood.

. . . and Lillian Sosnow and Hannah Brand. In sixth grade, my last year at P.S. 152, we started “socializing,” boys and girls together, the girls, physically more mature and socially more adept, Lillian and Hannah taking the lead with Friday night parties at their apartments. The entertainment consisted of “Spin the Bottle” and other such activities, designed to get the boys and girls to “mix” in

an innocent way. For some reason, the tip of the bottle never pointed my way; it was never my good fortune to disappear into a closet with a girl as the other boys did. Perhaps others nudged it to point in their direction. Today, if newspaper reports are correct, pre-adolescents have moved way beyond “Spin the Bottle.” As a grandfather at the dawn of the twenty-first century, I must admit I am envious when I should be appalled but, truly, *O Tempora, O Mores!* It’s nothing new; each generation of grandparents since the beginning of time professes shock at the activities of their grandchildren’s generation. As the old folk tune has it:

*Grandpa in his day sure had a lot to say  
about the way the young folks carried on  
It wasn’t really only when he was in his prime  
that people liked to laugh and sing and have themselves a time.*

On entering the seventh grade in September 1947, I returned to the building on Academy Street that had been P.S. 52 when I was there three years earlier. Now it was J.H.S. 52, a junior high school.

Picture me at that time in my schoolboy outfit: the white shirt, clipped onto it a brown and green tie with the autumn-colored aspen leaf swirling to the ground; the brass clip-on suspenders to hold my pants up; over the shirt a sleeveless V-neck pullover with argyle diamond pattern; brown knickers, either corduroy or wool, with buttons at the fly; and stockings, also in an argyle diamond pattern, showing between the tops of my brown oxford shoes and the elastic of the knickers. As I walked, my thighs brushing back and forth against each other, the corduroy knickers made a distinctive whooshing sound.

Girls wore long skirts, cut straight, sweaters with scarves around the neck, bobby-socks and saddle shoes; on gym days, they wore full skirts and white middy blouses with scarves around the collar, tied in a loose knot at the neck, the middy blouses worn outside the skirt at the waist.

As young teenagers, we no longer carried our books in bookbags as we had in grammar school. The boys carried their looseleaf books and textbooks slung under their arms; the girls hugged their books tightly against their chests. No one carried his books in a backpack, as schoolchildren do now; backpacks were used for hikes in the country, not for the walk from home to school and back.

New York City schoolchildren were rigorously tracked, from the RA or “rapid advance” section down to the D class. On entering junior high school, I was placed in 7A-RA. To be placed in the RA section meant that you skipped 7-B and 8-B, essentially doing two years’ work in one. I was delighted as a young boy to be able to move through junior high school so quickly, but it placed me at a disadvantage later on. It meant that I would be at least a year younger than my classmates, and emotionally and socially even more immature. That immaturity was to dog me through my high school and college years and beyond.

In junior high school, we were assigned a homeroom where we deposited our coats in the morning and heard announcements before dispersing to our other classes.. The rest of the day, we moved from one classroom to another for math, social sciences, English, and Spanish. In addition, there were two afternoons each week of “shop,” vocational training. While the girls were taught sewing and cooking, the boys learned electrical wiring. Perhaps our elderly shop teacher had been an electrician and that was the only skill he could teach. We spent our afternoons learning how to rig doorbells and dry cell batteries in parallel and serial circuits. What a triumph when we succeeded in getting the bells to ring!

Margaret Collins was my eighth-grade English teacher. She was a tall gangly woman, fortyish, with a full head of auburn hair worn shoulder length, as was the fashion in those years immediately after the war. Her deep-set flashing blue eyes blazed when she got angry. Since she had a powerful temper, I often saw that angry look in her eyes. A firmly-set mouth and a square jaw complete the picture.

In Miss Collins’s class, we were made to memorize poetry, a valuable educational tool not much practiced today. Among the poems we committed to memory was Coleridge’s “Rime of the Ancient Mariner”:

*It was an Ancient Mariner,  
and he stoppeth one of three,  
By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,  
now wherefore stops thou me?  
The bridegroom’s doors are open wide,  
and I am next of kin,  
The guests are met, the feast is set.  
May’st hear the merry din.*

and “Oh, Captain, My Captain,” the poem written by Walt Whitman after the assassination of President Lincoln:

*Oh, Captain! My Captain! Our fearful trip is done.  
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won.*

Often, I found myself staring out the window, daydreaming. That and a stubborn disposition to flout authority caused problems for me throughout my public school years, and beyond. During one of Miss Collins’s English classes, I was reading a comic book on my lap, under the desk, while she was talking. Miss Collins, seeing my eyes cast downward instead of on her, strode over to my desk, grabbed the comic book and ordered me to step out of the classroom. She followed me out into the hall and backed me up against the wall just outside the door. Grabbing me by the knot of my tie, she began to slam me back and forth against the wall, all the while loudly berating me for my lack of attention and disrespect. Mrs. Maloney, my homeroom teacher, was standing in the hall on corridor duty. While Miss Collins continued with her verbal and physical abuse, I turned toward Mrs. Maloney, my eyes pleading for her benevolent intervention, but in vain. Finally, I sheepishly promised Miss Collins that I would give her my full attention, and I was permitted to return to the classroom.

I was fond of Miss Hull, the elderly lady who taught seventh-grade history. She evidently liked me, too, because, at the end of the term, she commended me for my work and gave me as a reward a book on Captain Colin P. Kelly, Jr. and other American war heroes of World War II, inscribing a friendly inscription on the flyleaf. I was sure that she had paid for the book out of her own pocket, and was much moved by that. That book soon disappeared, like the rest of my childhood memorabilia.

At the age of 13 or 14, in seventh grade, the hormones were raging in my classmates and me, affecting our classroom behavior. There was a great deal of sexual teasing. One of the girls in the class, Rhea Feldman, had a prematurely-developed embonpoint. She was proud of her figure, too, arching her rib cage, carrying herself erect and favoring tight pastel-colored angora wool sweaters. A boy in the class, David Baum, was pudgy and oafish. Today we would call him the class nerd. As if anticipating a scene from the 1981 movie, “Porky,” some of my classmates conspired to push David into Rhea, to see what he would grab onto for support. Sure

enough, he fell forward, and, like a mountain climber reaching for whatever outcropping was at hand to break his fall, he clutched at Rhea's bust for support. She flushed a pretty shade of rosy-pink and he stammered his apologies, amid laughter and giggles from the other boys.

Another boy, Francis, was a budding exhibitionist. While the rest of us were attending to the teacher in the front of the room, Frank, in his customary seat in the back of the classroom, would take out his pubescent weenie and wave it back and forth. That drew snickers from those who were within sight of the display. My reaction: big deal!

Not all of us could weather the *sturm und drang* of early adolescence. One of my classmates, Melvin Glassman, was a tall thin boy who kept to himself, speaking hardly a word to his classmates. His consuming interest was the occult: Satanism, tarot cards, and the prophecies of Nostradamus. Today, an alert teacher might identify him as clearly troubled and refer him for counseling to a school social worker. That didn't happen. He was found one afternoon, hanging limp and dead from the steampipes in the basement of his apartment building.

In seventh grade, I started dating. I asked Francine Weintraub, a classmate whom I had known for years, to the movies at the Alpine Theater. I was at the theatre at the appointed time but Francine never appeared. The next day, she told me firmly that a date is not a date unless the boy first picks up the girl at her house. I didn't like Francine enough to ask her out again, and I'm sure there were no regrets on her part. There were other dates, though, with other girls in my class—to the Alpine or the Inwood Theatre, or to the Central Park Zoo, or to the Museum of Natural History. These were all "cheap dates," requiring very little money, but could be very pleasant outings with the right girl.

In the early elementary grades, we had received report cards twice a year, on goldenrod-yellow manila stock. On the left-hand page were the academic grades; on the right-hand page, boxes relating to conduct and deportment and any comments that the teacher wished to pass on to the parents. My academic marks were uniformly good, not so the grades for conduct and deportment. My teachers consistently checked the boxes for "Could do better" and "Shows little consideration for the rights of others." I wish I could remember the incidents that led my teachers to check those boxes.

Did my mother, at the next open school day, discuss my lapses in conduct with the teacher? I'm not sure, but I am certain in my memory that she never took me aside to lecture me about my failings; that was not her way.

Later, as I progressed through elementary school and into junior high school, I became more serious about my studies. I was the know-it-all, the kid who raised his hand and waved it urgently whenever the teacher asked a question of the class. Teachers had to admonish me to give others in the class a chance to respond. My classmates called me a "show-off." They referred to me, and not in complimentary tones, as the "walking encyclopedia." Or they snidely called me the "walking dictionary" because I usually won the spelling bees, having the ability to visualize in my mind's eye almost every word that came up.

One day, as I was talking to the teacher after class, a classmate came up and challenged me: "How do you spell 'Constantinople'? Go ahead, spell it." Missing the point entirely, I went on to answer "C-O-N-S-T-A-N-T-I-N-O-P-L-E." The right answer, of course, was "I-T."<sup>170</sup> Total silence ensued. After the boy explained the joke, I was embarrassed at my display of know-it-all-ness, the boy was annoyed that I had ruined his joke, and the teacher, observing the event, was pained for both of us.

In the fall of 1947, when I was 13, Mother began a new job, teaching German at the Walden School at 88th Street and Central Park West in Manhattan. Midway through the fall term, she told me that she had arranged for my transfer to Walden. Hallelujah! Deliverance!

## THE WALDEN SCHOOL

I had many reasons to be elated at the news that I would be moving in mid-year from J.H.S. 52 to the Walden School. One was the notion that I had been plucked from mediocrity—from a future as one of the faceless hundreds of students who would spend their high school years at George Washington High School, up on the bluff overlooking the Harlem River; now I would get the demanding education that I so much wanted. I would no longer be derogated as a “brain,” because the other children would be equally bright and studious. Perhaps, too, there was an element of snobbery involved: at Walden I would be in a “better crowd” than I was destined for at a public high school. Finally, I had a mundane sense of relief that I would not have to finish the play script that we had been assigned to write in our ninth grade English class.

Mother’s search for a suitable school for me had begun the previous year, when she applied on my behalf for admission to the Horace Mann School for Boys in Riverdale. Horace Mann was modeled on an elite English public school. Having become accustomed to school buildings hemmed in on all sides by apartment buildings, I was mightily impressed by the spacious campus at Horace Mann, by the gray fieldstone buildings with their slate roofs and leaded glass windows and the beautifully manicured athletic fields. On our visit to the campus, Mother and I had an interview with the venerable headmaster, Charles C. Tillinghast, in his oak-paneled office. Ultimately, nothing came of that, perhaps for financial reasons or because Mother preferred that I attend a coed high school.

There were no such obstacles to my admission to Walden. It had probably been agreed when Mother accepted the teaching position there that her sons would be able to attend, at a substantial discount from the normal tuition or perhaps at no cost at all to her.

Walden offered a choice of German or Latin as four-year language courses, those being two of the most heavily inflected languages. Because Mother was teaching German, I chose to take Latin. German, a modern language, would have been more useful, but the prospect of having Mother as my teacher made me distinctly uncomfortable. Two years later, when it was Ben's turn to make the choice, he had no such qualms, and took German from Mother. Having elected to take Latin, I used the few weeks remaining before the start of the second term to sit down with Mother and have her tutor me in that language. We spent many afternoons together poring over *Publius et Furianus*, the Latin I textbook, my introduction to the world of conjugations, declensions, voices and moods. By the time I started classes at Walden, I was abreast of my classmates in that language.

So, in mid-January 1948, I joined "Group 13," as the first-year high school class was called. That first morning, and each schoolday morning for the next four years, I took the A train at Dyckman-200th Street to 125th Street, changing there to the AA local, got off at the rear exit of the 86th Street station, and walked the few feet from the subway entrance to the front door of the school.

Occupying the northwest corner of 88th Street and Central Park West, this large limestone-faced building, formerly a German-Jewish social club, resembled other institutional buildings of its vintage on Central Park West and Fifth Avenue. A wide flight of stairs lead to the front door. Inside, another flight of steps brought the visitor to the marble-floored lobby. Straight ahead, at the far side of the lobby, were the grand stairs to the second floor. The high school classrooms were on the second and third floors, while the upper floors were devoted to the pre-school and nursery. One could spend one's entire educational life, from age 3 to age 18, at Walden, as some of my classmates had done.

On the entry level, off the lobby to the left, was the auditorium; to the right, at the corner of the building, the director's office. On a mezzanine just below ground level was the lunchroom, and, at the basement level, the dimly-lit gymnasium. The gym was nothing but a long, narrow basketball court, backboards at each end, with no

room to spare along the sidelines or under the baskets. No doubt the court had been the swimming pool in the building's earlier incarnation as a social club. One watched the basketball games from a running track that circled the court, about twenty feet up.

In emerging from the subway stop at Central Park West and 88th Street, I was in a sense also emerging from the German-Jewish cocoon that was Washington Heights and Inwood. However, without realizing it, I was simply exchanging one parochial world for another. The teachers and students at Walden, but especially the students, were even less diverse and more predominantly Jewish than my classmates at J.H.S. 52 had been. At our 50th reunion, one of the returning class members recalled that our history teacher, Sherwood Trask, had swept his arm grandly across the classroom and told us that we were a microcosm of America. A brash student, she had chided him, saying that our class—a class of 22 Jews and three Christians, twenty-three whites and two African-Americans—was in no way representative of this nation. Not only were we almost entirely Jewish, but in our views on politics and culture we thought and spoke almost as one. That did not trouble me, as diversity was not high on my list of prized values at the time.

The explanation for that absence of diversity lay in Walden's roots in the progressive education movement, which had as its goal nothing less than the reformation of America's educational system. The school was founded in 1917 by Margaret Naumburg and Alice K. Pollitzer, based on John Dewey's principles of progressive education. Dr. Naumburg was a pioneer in the use of art therapy as a psychoanalytic tool. Pollitzer was a feminist leader before modern feminism; she had participated in the march for women's voting rights after World War I that led to the 1921 adoption of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution, extending suffrage to women. The two women understood that Freud's psychoanalytic insights into the importance of the unconscious were applicable not solely to psychoanalysis but had an important place in education as well.

*At Walden, Dr. Naumburg put into practice her conviction that the emotional development of children, fostered through encouragement of spontaneous creative expression and self-motivated learning, should take precedence over the traditional intellectual approach to the teaching of a standardized curriculum.<sup>171</sup>*

These were heady, almost revolutionary, concepts in 1917, but they held a strong appeal for many middle-class Jewish parents on the Upper West Side and elsewhere in Manhattan.

The term “progressive school” has had for many years a negative connotation as a place where the children rule the roost, where they decide what they want to learn, and consequently learn little or nothing. That was far from true at Walden. When it was described, and described itself, as a progressive school, what did that term connote? To begin with, the classes were referred to not as “Forms,” as in other upper-class private schools, but as “Groups”: Group 13, 14, 15 and 16 were the high school classes. The classes were small; there were 25 in my graduating class. The student-teacher relationship was one of approachability and informality. To foster that easy relationship, we called our teachers by their first names. There was a heavy emphasis on creativity: on theatre, modern dance, painting, crafts, choral singing and creative writing. All this was designed to bring out the talents and abilities latent in all of us, without neglecting our academic studies. As children of achievers, high expectations were placed on the students, and they had high expectations of themselves. The education I received at Walden was outstanding not simply as a preparation for college, but on its own terms as well.

As a private school, Walden did not require that its teachers be certified by the New York Board of Regents, nor was it limited in its hiring of teachers to those who had such certification. It could hire men and women as teachers who had spent much of their working life in other fields and now wanted to impart their knowledge in the classroom. It would have been an ordeal for them later in life to meet the State’s rigorous certification requirements, which included taking and passing a given number of credit hours in education courses. My mother was certainly in that category.

Others on the Walden faculty could not have been hired as teachers in the public school system for political reasons: in the 1930’s and 40’s, they had been, if not members of the Communist Party, at the least participants in left-leaning organizations that would later be included in the Attorney General’s list of “subversive” organizations. These men and women could not or would not take the loyalty oath required at that time of all public employees.

For these reasons and others, the Walden teachers were an idiosyncratic lot. In my first year there, my English teacher was Berta Rantz, an elderly woman who held firm views on almost everything and was forthright in expressing them. Not long after my arrival at Walden, Berta called me up to her desk. “Danny,” she said, “your speech is extremely nasal. You have to learn how to speak from the chest and not through your nose.” Then and there, with some of my classmates gathered around us, she gave me some breathing exercises to do, showing me how to project my voice from the chest instead of “in the nose,” as I was doing. After a few such exercises, I hyperventilated and passed out. As the classroom seemingly reeled around me, I collapsed onto the floor, then was quickly revived and helped back to my feet. Despite my embarrassment at being “shown up” in front of my classmates, Berta’s lesson stayed with me and, from that time on, I made a conscious effort to speak as she had shown me.

When Berta left Walden to join Hans Maeder on the faculty of the Stockbridge International School, Raymond Jahn replaced her. Ray was a tall gaunt man with a long face, hollow cheeks, a shock of wheat-blond hair falling over one eye, ice-blue eyes and a blond mustache drooping in wisps over the corners of his mouth. He spoke in a cultured but tentative way, almost in a whisper. Maybe this was his way of overcoming a childhood stuttering problem. He favored Harris tweed jackets in a brown herringbone pattern with patches on the elbows, the very image of the absent-minded professor. I remember Ray fondly, because he had a passion for what he was teaching, and conveyed his love of poetry and drama to his students.

Ray Jahn and his wife were also important in my adolescent development in their evident love for each other. Ray and his wife, her name now forgotten, had married shortly before his arrival at Walden. She was some years older than he. Whenever I saw them together, she gazed at him with a fondness, a worshipful intensity, that utterly enthralled me. Growing up in a fatherless household, I had not been witness in my own home to the love between a husband and wife, nor did I see in the other married couples in my life the ideal of marital love and devotion that I saw in Ray and his wife. I deeply admired them for that, and craved the same in my own life.

My history teacher, Sherwood Trask, brought an enthusiasm and an endearing eccentricity to his teaching responsibilities. Well into his sixties at the time, he still had the lithe build that he had had as a high jumper at Dartmouth College forty-five years earlier. When we were seated and ready for class to begin, Sherwood would bound through the classroom door, take a running leap and jump onto the desk. Then, in a theatrical gesture, he would aim an imaginary machine gun at us and “mow us down,” with accompanying ack-ack-ack sound effects. Perhaps he had served as a machine gunner in World War I and was now expressing his opinion of us non-verbally in that way; otherwise, I don’t know what the mock machine-gunning represented.

If there was a textbook, Sherwood didn’t teach to it. He assigned certain materials for reading, and expected us to master what we had read. Instead, his lectures were replete with references to those concepts which he expected us to take with us in life long after the dates of the Athenian Republic and the orations of Pericles were forgotten. In this he was successful: I have retained these lessons all my life. They have been corroborated in the teachings of many learned men throughout the ages.

One such “truth” was the eternal triangle. Sherwood insisted, correctly, that, whether in the world of ideas or in the concrete world, relationships were the key to everything, that we must always be alert to how pieces in this fascinating jigsaw puzzle we call life fit together, one with the other. There is nothing new in that; classical man knew it well. Girolamo Cardano, an inventor, mathematician and astrologer of the late Renaissance, quoting Synesius of Cyrenaica, a sixth century theologian and churchman, said that “[t]he Cosmos is a world of wonders, one in which everything is signified by everything, since all things in the one great animal of the world are related.”<sup>172</sup>

That concept must be fundamental, because it has persisted in similar words down to our own time: “All of life is interrelated. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny.”<sup>173</sup>

Those teachings and others like them were what Sherwood had in mind when he emphasized his eternal triangle of relationships. Everything in the world, he said, is bound up with everything else. The ability to understand the connection between seemingly disparate data lies at the heart of the scientific method and, indeed,

of all intelligence. William James, no intellectual slouch himself, wrote that

*genius, then, . . . is identical with the possession of similar association to an extreme degree. This answers the question why Darwin and Newton had to be waited for so long. Alike in the arts, in literature, in practical affairs, and in science, association by similarity is the prime condition of success.*<sup>174</sup>

Sherwood taught another lesson: the eternal verities, as he called them. We read in *Kobeletb* (Ecclesiastes) that “There is nothing new under the sun.” In the 1942 movie “Casablanca,” Dooley Wilson as Sam, sitting at the piano in Rick’s Bar, expressed the same thought in song lyrics:

*It’s still the same old story, a fight for love and glory, a case of do or die, the fundamental things of life, as time goes by.*<sup>175</sup>

In the speech he delivered in 1949 upon accepting the Nobel Prize for literature, William Faulkner said that nothing in writing is of any importance

*but the old verities and truths of the heart, the old universal truths lacking which any story is ephemeral and doomed—love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice.*<sup>176</sup>

That was Sherwood’s point, too: from classical times to the 20th century, what motivates men and women hasn’t changed: it is “love and glory” and love of country, pride, envy, and greed, yes, but courage and altruism as well. Society and culture change, but the fundamental nature of man does not. If it were otherwise, the Bible, Shakespeare and the great classical epics would not speak to us moderns from centuries past as they do. That is a lesson I continually re-learn for myself as I read in many different fields.

It was Sherwood, too, who assigned us our first serious termpapers, stimulating us to do research and to organize our writing logically into introductions, arguments and conclusions. I enjoyed writing those term papers and took pride in them when the time came to turn them in. Laboriously, in longhand, I wrote on “British Socialism: The Middle Way,” “The History of Christianity” (in 25 pages!), “The Greeks: From the Coming of the Dorians to the Repulse of the Persians,” and “The Early Years of the Judiciary Branch of the Federal Government.” This last dealt in part with a subject that Sherwood, as an enthusiastic alumnus of Dartmouth

College, was very familiar with: the famous United States Supreme Court case, *Trustees of Dartmouth College v. Woodward*. I found the key to Sherwood's heart by including in my paper that famous line, known to all Dartmouth students and alumni, from Daniel Webster's argument before the Court: "It is a small school, sirs, but there are those who love it." That Sherwood had read my paper carefully was shown by his red-pencil comments on every page, many of them sarcastic but serious and encouraging when called for. At the end he summarized: "A+ (choose your college)."

Another memorable teacher was my art instructor, Sylvia Rutkoff. She gave me constant encouragement, praising my artwork and prodding me to do more. It was not her role as a teacher, as she saw it, to give formal instruction in art. That would not have been the Walden way. Rather, she saw it as her responsibility to bring out the best that each student had in him, and that she assuredly did. I paid perhaps too much attention to her compliments, because, sometime after leaving Walden, it dawned on me that I did not have the artistic talent to transfer to paper nor to express in any other medium what I saw in my mind's eye. This so discouraged me that, except for a few efforts here and there, I stopped my painting and drawing for the next five decades. Many otherwise creative men and women have had the same experience: "*All my life my instinct has been to abandon anything for which I have no talent.*"<sup>177</sup>

Rollo May has observed that, in a truly creative person, one for whom the act of creation is central to his being, the

*hopeless discrepancy between conception and realization is at the root of all artistic creation, and it helps explain the anguish which seems to be an unavoidable component of that experience.*<sup>178</sup>

For me, there was not that compelling need to create, and hence I felt no anguish in discontinuing it. Only now, in my retirement years, have I returned to painting, remembering always the debt I owe to Sylvia Rutkoff for her steadfast encouragement.

Our choral director at Walden was Harold (Hal) Aks. His main job was as conductor of the Interracial Chorus, an early effort to mold singers of every race and background into a cohesive singing organization. Hal succeeded admirably in doing that. The Interracial Chorus gave twice-yearly concerts at Town Hall, in midtown Manhattan, and those concerts were always well-received. His rehearsal pianist for the Interracial Chorus was David Randolph,

who succeeded him as its conductor. Hal Aks also taught at the Dalton School in Manhattan for 47 years, and went on to become a professor of music at Sarah Lawrence College and director of its chorus and chamber choir.

Hal applied to the Walden students the same techniques that he used with the Interracial Chorus—relentless discipline, combined with great energy and *joie de vivre*. There were no auditions and no sight-reading tests; everyone who wished to take part could do so. Since there was a chronic shortage of real tenors, the French teacher, Jim Mantinband, was pressed into service. Then in his mid-30's, Jim was shorter than average and rotund, with a large waistline and a florid complexion. He had a ringing tenor voice, and was fully at ease in all the great choral works. With Jim singing tenor, hardly any others were needed to balance the deeper male voices.

When I first entered the auditorium as a member of the chorus, I was an utter neophyte in choral singing, so much so that, when I was asked what “part” I sang, I responded that I was an alto, thinking it was a male part. On taking my place with the other altos, I realized immediately that I was in a sea of girls. Embarrassed, and realizing my mistake, I edged over to stand at the far side of the alto group, next to the boys who sang tenor. Later, when I realized that I was more comfortable in the bass range than the tenor, I moved to the bass section, and there I remained.

Over the next four years at Walden, some of my happiest times were spent singing at rehearsals and concerts of the Walden Chorus. The rehearsals began with vocal limbering up, maw-ee-yaw-ee-yaw, maw-ee-yaw-ee-yaw, starting at the bottom of the scale and working our way upwards, and then back down again, Hal accompanying our warm-ups with sweeping motions of his conducting arm. Then came the practice of whatever piece we were working on. It was an eclectic repertoire, ranging from Haydn's Lord Nelson Mass and Brahms' German Requiem to Negro spirituals. In Hal Aks's chorus, I would encounter once again the Gilbert and Sullivan patter song, of the type that I had been introduced to four years earlier in sixth grade. Now we learned one from “Patience”:

*A magnet hung in a hardware shop  
and all around was a loving crop  
Of scissors and needles and nails and knives,  
offering love for all their lives.*

*But for iron the magnet had no whim;  
though it charmed iron it charmed not him.  
Scissors and needles and knives he spurned,  
for he'd set his heart on a silver churn . . .*

When the day came for a public performance in the Walden auditorium, professional singers were brought in to sing the solo parts. Today, sixty-five years later, I can sing the bass parts of many of these choral works, and I have been singing them to myself all my life.

Our Latin teacher was Lucile Kohn, sister of Alice K. (Nanny) Pollitzer, co-founder of the school.<sup>179</sup> Then in her 70's, Lucile taught me the second and third years of Latin: Caesar's *Gallie War Commentaries* in the second year and Cicero's *De Orationes* in the third year. Before the start of my fourth year, I told her that I was considering dropping the final year of Latin for something more stimulating. She said to me, "Danny, you can't do that. To take three years of Latin without taking Virgil, that's like eating an elaborate dinner and not eating the dessert!" That was an apt simile for her: she was a large woman, with large flabby upper arms, and had an insatiable craving for chocolate. To give Lucile a box of chocolates was the key to her heart. More to mollify her than for any other reason, I did sign up to study Virgil's *Aeneid* in my final year at Walden. Ten of us seniors sat at the seminar table with Lucile. She would go around the room from one person to the next, asking us to sight-translate the lines we had been assigned. More often than not, we were unprepared, and read from "ponies" or "trots," interlinear translations that we held in our laps under the table. If Lucile knew what we were doing, she never let on, never chided us for it.

Lucile sent many opportunities my way. One such was the *New York Times Youth Forum*, a Sunday morning radio roundtable broadcast over WQXR, the radio station of the *New York Times*. Students from high schools in the metropolitan area were given the opportunity to ask questions of *Times* correspondents, questions related to their field of expertise. The moderator was Dorothy Gordon, the long-time doyenne of that program. When it was Walden's turn to send a student, Lucile invited me to be its representative. I eagerly accepted the assignment.

That Sunday, Miss Gordon's guest on the show was Delbert Clark, who had been the *Times* correspondent in West Germany in the immediate postwar years. The subject was "Shall We Re-Arm Germany?," a contentious issue in those years. Mindful of the horror that Germany had inflicted on the world during the war just ended, some, like Henry J. Morgenthau, Roosevelt's Treasury Secretary, would have been pleased to see the entire nation plowed under, turned into a wasteland. That cohort stoutly resisted the notion that Germany should be allowed to rearm, enabling it, perhaps, to inflict yet more horror on the world in the next generation. I had a slightly different "take," expressing concern that a rearmed Germany might throw in its lot with Russia. What did I know? On the other side were those who saw Soviet Communism as the greater threat, and would assign to Germany the role of buffer between the Soviet Union and Western Europe, the first line of defense, so to speak. Some on the panel, echoing that viewpoint, said that a rearmed Germany was necessary to stop Soviet aggression. We know now that this viewpoint prevailed: limited rearmament of West Germany was the policy adopted by Presidents Harry Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower and their respective Secretaries of State, George C. Marshall and John Foster Dulles.

Lucile Kohn also served as Walden's liaison with the colleges and universities. She had firm ideas of those schools that were appropriate for Walden graduates and those that were unsuitable. Foremost among the latter was Princeton University. No Walden graduate attended Princeton while Lucile was recommending college placements. Even though Princeton had by then forsaken its religious quota system, Lucile felt that it was still an inhospitable place for Jews, and had been so for decades:

*Remember Robert Cohn in The Sun Also Rises? Graduates from Princeton, boxes there, never thinks about the Jewish part of himself, and is still an oddity, at least to Ernest Hemingway.<sup>180</sup>*

In Lucile's keen judgment, what drew the scions of the Southern elite to Princeton made it a place to stay away from for freethinking progressives of the kind who attended Walden.

Lucile did her best for me in her role as college guidance counselor, making me aware of the New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR) at Cornell University. The ILR School, a unit of the State University of New York, had been in

existence for only five years. As a state school, the ILR School was tuition-free to New York residents. At the time, I knew nothing about Cornell, except that I could get an excellent education there at no cost. At Lucile's urging, I applied to Cornell, as well as to Brandeis University and to Queens College, my "safe" school.

I visited Brandeis that fall of my senior year in high school to get a better sense of the place. The university had been only recently organized by Boston-area Jews wishing to found an institution where Jews could be at home and not a minority, where they would not face the overt or hidden discrimination they might encounter elsewhere. For this purpose, the founders acquired what had been the Middlesex Dental School in Waltham. From the start, a strong effort was made to recruit non-Jewish students as well, but Jewish boys and girls predominated. My conclusion, right or wrong, from that weekend trip, was that Brandeis was "too Jewish" for my tastes, its students lacking the diversity of backgrounds that I thought then, and still think, is essential to a fully-realized college experience. I was accepted at Brandeis, with a generous scholarship, but I turned it down in favor of Cornell. I probably would not have gone to Brandeis even if I had been rejected at Cornell.

After sending my application in to the ILR School, I was summoned to the School's New York City extension office on Union Square to be interviewed and to write an essay on labor's role in mobilizing for the war effort. The war in question was the Korean War, which had begun the preceding June. The interview must have been successful and my response to that essay question adequate, because in mid-April I received the thick packet from Cornell which let me know, even before opening it, that I had been accepted there. Scholarships from the Sidney Hillman Foundation and the Kiwanis made it easier for me to afford that first year of college.

In advising me to apply to Cornell and in writing a very favorable reference, Lucile Kohn was one of those persons, mostly women, who guided me and eased my way along life's path. She has been aptly described as "a distinguished scholar and outstanding teacher [who] made much of her talents and enriched the life of a large community of students and friends in many generations."<sup>181</sup>

Our mathematics teacher was Sam Nash, a young man in his mid-30's at the time. He taught geometry in Group 14 (the second year of high school), algebra in Group 15 and chemistry in our

senior year. I had no aptitude for math or science; these were all required “grin and bear it” subjects for me. I was satisfied to receive C’s in those courses.

There were others in my class who found mathematics exciting and challenging. Long after the rest of us had left for our next class, they would stay behind with Sam to pose and solve problems at the blackboard. Sam also taught physics to those juniors who elected to take it. I avoided physics in favor of the alternative, two years of French, but one of my classmates, Fred Shure, found math and physics so stimulating and had such an aptitude for those subjects that he devoted his life to them, becoming a professor of physics at the University of Michigan.

Walden parents were predominantly Jewish, successful professionals or businessmen and their wives, with apartments on Central Park West, West End Avenue or the side streets on the West Side. That they were mostly Jewish was hardly surprising, given the school’s location on Central Park West. The Upper West Side was, and perhaps still is, a favored location for upper-middle-class Jews who tended to be, or considered themselves to be, less conventional than those who live on Fifth Avenue, Park Avenue and other East Side addresses. Nor was it surprising that they were predominantly Democratic or left-of-Democratic, given the school’s origin and its continuing commitment to the progressive ideals of its founders.

In the political realm, those ideals were embodied during my high school years in what President Franklin Delano Roosevelt had called the New Deal: the then-radical notion that government at every level, but especially the federal government, had a large role to play in bringing the nation out of the Depression and in erecting a safety net for the poor and disadvantaged who could not survive without it. Looking back on those years, a writer of that generation recalled that

*we believed in politics and, strange as it may now seem, in government. We felt it could operate as a bulwark against poverty or oppression. Looking back, the belief seems quaint and rather touching. We took it seriously. All around us was suffering and despair, the sense of a system gone murderously wrong, the desperate need to find an answer, any answer, that promised relief. The government supplied that answer. It performed the necessary role of an elected government: to help the people who elected it.<sup>182</sup>*

Walden parents shared that view of the role of government and, from a strong sense of noblesse oblige, considered it their personal duty to provide support and assistance to victims of race discrimination and others less privileged than they. Some were staunch New Deal Democrats. Others were Mensheviks, the White Russians who had overthrown the Czar in 1917 and were themselves defeated, at huge cost in life and blood, by the Lenin-led Bolsheviks. Still others admired what Lenin and Leon Trotsky had tried to achieve in the Soviet Union. Perhaps they admired Russia for its suffering under Hitler and for its resistance to Nazism. They may have been committed Communists who were disillusioned in 1939 when Hitler and Stalin signed their infamous Mutual Non-Aggression Pact.

In those days, personal wealth and radically leftist political beliefs were not incompatible. Enormously wealthy individuals donated large sums to the Communist Party.<sup>183</sup> The parents of some of my classmates were of that type: the well-off haute bourgeoisie, with a New Deal mentality that led them to give large sums to left-wing causes. Most of them had no use for communism. They would have called themselves independent Socialists, seeking a middle way between communism and capitalism and seeking also to correct social injustice of every form. One could find Walden parents at every point on the left-center continuum, but few or none at the right end of the political spectrum.

My junior high school and high school years saw political tumult around the world. In 1945, when I was a sixth grader, World War II ended and President Roosevelt died. The end of the war, far from launching an era of world peace, triggered chaos and massive unrest in Western Europe, Communist takeovers of central governments across Eastern Europe and tectonic shifts of populations from one country to another.

It is hard now, after more than sixty years, to describe or recapture the fervor of the immediate post-war years. Men mustered out of military service set about to raise families, buy homes and achieve what they could only dream of in their foxholes and cockpits and on board their warships. Many were imbued with an intense desire to fashion a new world order—not Hitler's New World Order but one in which, in the words of the old Negro spiritual, we weren't "gonna study war no more." There would be an end to violence of nation against nation, of peoples against

peoples. At home, the urgent domestic agenda that Roosevelt had laid out in his New Deal would be realized. There would be an end to racism, with equal justice for all; decent, safe and sanitary housing for everyone; and free collective bargaining, with strong industry-wide unions offsetting the power of Big Business.

Those of us a half-generation younger than the returning veterans, too young to have served in the war, shared their vision of what the future might hold. We took our politics and our civic responsibilities seriously. Many of my contemporaries joined organizations dedicated to that cause: the United World Federalists, the Students for Democratic Action, the Young People's Socialist League, the Student League for Industrial Democracy and the like. Some groups of that ilk would later be labeled "subversive" by the Subversive Activities Control Board. Those who had enlisted in the cause paid a steep price for their youthful enthusiasm.

Even before the end of the war, the perception had grown among our leaders, the mass media and the citizenry that our wartime ally, the Soviet Union, would be the next great threat to democracy. A month after taking office, President Truman met with Stalin at Potsdam, outside of Berlin. The number-one topic at the Potsdam Conference was the postwar shape of Europe. At that conference and later, Truman took a hard-nosed attitude toward Stalin and his puppets in Eastern Europe. Events would prove that tough approach to be well-justified. Within a year after the end of the war, what Winston Churchill would call the "Iron Curtain" was to descend over all of Eastern Europe. In one country after another, the Communists took over, liquidating democratically-elected leaders or driving them into exile. President Truman also took a hard line towards Communists and Communist-sympathizers in the federal government, supporting the controversial efforts of the Congress to root out those who were deemed "disloyal" to the United States.

For all these reasons, left-wingers of every persuasion, as well as unreconstructed New Deal Democrats, despised Truman and felt he had betrayed the Rooseveltian ideals. At the Democratic convention in 1948, Truman chose Senator Alben Barkley of Kentucky as his running mate. Because of Truman's landmark executive order desegregating the armed services, the Southern Democrats bolted the party and nominated Strom Thurmond of South Carolina. The left wing also bolted, forming the Progressive

Party and nominating Roosevelt's erstwhile vice-president, Henry A. Wallace, for President.

The Wallace candidacy excited New York liberals who saw themselves as having no home in the Democratic Party with the death of FDR and the ascension of Harry Truman to the Presidency. Huge rallies were held in Madison Square Garden, then at 53d Street and Eighth Avenue in Manhattan, promoting the Wallace candidacy. Parents of Walden students contributed financially to his campaign. Large numbers of Walden students shared the idealism that characterized Wallace supporters. They turned out for the rallies and sang the familiar union songs with a pro-Wallace twist.

At 14, I was politically aware, if not politically active, and took a keen interest in the 1948 presidential race. I knew all the slogans of the time: "One World or None," "Peace in the World or the World in Pieces" and others. I talked the progressive talk and sang with gusto the progressive songs, but I could not share the passion of many Waldenites for Henry Wallace. With his craggy features, he looked unreliable to me, "un-Presidential." His left-wing associations were also troubling to me. Instead, I enthusiastically supported Truman as a worthy successor to Franklin D. Roosevelt, a moderate Democrat committed to carrying on Roosevelt's New Deal programs. In fact, he sought to ride FDR's coattails by adopting as his rallying cry, "A Fair Deal for All Americans." I dreaded the possibility that a split vote might enable the Republicans to take the White House, undoing all the good that had been accomplished in the previous fifteen years under Democratic presidents. I did not, as I've written earlier, condemn Truman for his decision to drop the atomic bomb on Japan.

Moreover, in May 1948, Harry Truman had courageously, over the strenuous protests of the Secretary of State, George C. Marshall, and the warnings of other Western nations, recognized the new State of Israel, making the U.S.A. the first world power to do so. Without that immediate American recognition and support, Israel might well have been stillborn, dead on arrival. Truman's action, so unpopular with other important constituencies, endeared him to American Jews, especially to this teen-age American Jew.

In that famous 1948 election, the count was so close that the Chicago Tribune, anticipating a Republican victory, put a banner headline on its late evening edition: "DEWEY WINS!" Truman

went to bed that night thinking he had lost the election, but, when the late returns came in from the West Coast, he was the winner. Back in New York, we heaved a collective sigh of relief at “our” narrow victory. Wallace had drawn only 1,000,000 votes, far fewer than he had expected. Neither Wallace nor Strom Thurmond’s Dixiecrat party drew enough votes away from Truman and the Democrats to deprive him of his victory. One shudders to think of how history might have changed had Dewey or Wallace, or, God forbid, Strom Thurmond, won that election.

In politics at every level, Walden parents and their sons and daughters were active as contributors and campaign workers. That activism did not end with the 1948 campaign, nor was it confined to elections. During the civil rights struggles of the ‘50’s and early ‘60’s and in the Vietnam protests later in that decade, members of the Walden family actively manned the ramparts for the causes they believed in. One Waldenite, Andrew Goodman, paid with his life in that cause; he was murdered, along with Michael Schwerner and James Chaney in Philadelphia, Mississippi in the “civil rights summer” of 1964. I was never comfortable in manning the ramparts, as Goodman and so many other Walden students did. .

There was no strong tradition of political activism in my family. Yes, they had causes that they passionately believed in. My father, as I have already shown, was an ardent Zionist (although not so ardent that he was willing to stake his life and his family’s on it by resettling in the Promised Land). But both of my parents came from comfortable middle class families; nothing in their upbringing would have stirred them to rally to Communist causes. More importantly, theirs was not the radical temperament. By nature and by nurture they were inclined to the life of the mind, to the life of reason. Their passions were more likely to be aroused by burning unresolved philological questions than by ongoing controversies over the evils of capitalism. In my own experience, there had not been at my grandparents’ dinner table impassioned discussions of political issues or of the wrongs committed in the name of government.

This is not to say that my family was apolitical. They were not the egghead intellectuals, their faces buried in their books and oblivious to the world around them, that popular culture scorns. We have already seen how my father, as a newcomer to this

country, actively sought to influence opinion in Washington against the threatened repeal of the Balfour Declaration.<sup>184</sup>

Grandfather, too, took a keen interest in events of the day. In the years immediately after the end of the war, many Americans, even American Jews, preferred to look the other way and not inquire too closely into the guilt of specific individuals for the excesses of the Nazi regime, other than those Nazi leaders who were tried in Nuremberg and other war crimes trials. Not so Grandfather. In 1949, he addressed a strongly-worded letter to a former colleague of his, Hans Joachim Moser, who had publicly expressed anti-Semitic opinions during the 1930's. "Along with so many others," Grandfather wrote in his letter, "you helped to lay the groundwork for the mentality which led ultimately to the slaughterhouses and the gas chambers."<sup>185</sup>

Likewise, my great-grandfather Louis Lewin's world was by no means confined to the laboratory and the lecture hall. His political sympathies lay with the left-wing Social Democrats; he was a champion of the underclass among whom he had grown up. Our family had had only disdain for the Kaiser and for the ruling Junker caste. They believed that the Junkers had led the nation into a disastrous war and they had suffered along with millions of other Germans in the ruinous inflation that had followed in the early 1920's. But in all these events my family had remained on the sidelines, devoting its mental energies not to politics and causes but to scholarly research and writing. Perhaps learning from them, it was not in me to feel passion for any cause, no matter how powerful the arguments in its favor, nor to scream slogans at rallies, and certainly not to put my safety and well-being on the line. I would be the well-informed bystander, not the doer.

Mine was not the radical left-wing stance of so many Walden students and their parents. In the postwar struggle of competing ideologies, the left and the right, communism and capitalism, I considered myself even in my high school years to be a mainstream New Deal Democrat, suspicious of the mega-corporations, trusting in government to rein in the excesses of unbridled free private enterprise and relying on the federal government to eradicate racism and to tilt the scales in favor of labor in the struggle with capitalism. As a young teenager, my model was Swedish socialism, which at that time was widely heralded as "the middle way."<sup>186</sup> Ah, well, we live and learn. Even the Swedes eventually became disenchanted

with their “middle way.” I, too, came to realize, with the anti-Communist witch hunts of the late 40’s and 50’s, culminating in the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in 1953, that government was not the pure and unselfish mechanism which we in our youthful idealism had hoped it would be. Our leaders could not always be counted on to do the right thing. Decisions taken at the highest levels could not only be misguided but corrupt, too, based on justifications having nothing to do with their merits, and these decisions and the processes by which they came to be made were more likely than not deliberately hidden from the American people.

Sad to say, Walden as an independent school did not survive to the end of the 20th century, falling victim to a declining interest in the explicitly progressive education that was its reason for being. That stately limestone building at 1 West 88th Street, through whose portals so many boys and girls had passed, the place where so much knowledge was imparted from teacher to student and among the students as well, now belongs to the Trevor Day School. When it merged with Walden in 1991, Trevor Day acquired that historic building for its upper school. The Walden School, where I spent so many of my formative years, lives only in my memory, and in the memory of its other alumni and friends.

## WALDEN CLASSMATES

**I**n June 1951, I graduated from the Walden School with twenty-four other teen-age boys and girls. Fifty years later, on June 2, 2001, I returned for a class reunion, my first since graduation.

Fifteen of my classmates also came back. Of the others, three had died, three could not attend, and the whereabouts of the remaining three were unknown. It was a jolt for me to see men and women, now grandmothers and grandfathers, many of whom I hadn't seen since graduation day in 1951, and to try to find in their faces those whom I remembered from fifty years earlier. In most instances, though, the underlying persona, their aura, if you will, had not changed. It seems that life's joys and punches to the gut, whatever the mix, do not alter one's fundamental outlook on life. It was exhilarating to see the classmates who for four years had been my extended family. Those boys and girls, even more so than my teachers, had shaped my world at Walden. Just as, among relatives, there are some whom you love, others to whom you are indifferent and, perhaps, others whom you actively dislike, it was that way, too, for me among my 24 classmates.

When I came to Walden in January 1948, I felt very much the outsider, thrust into what seemed to me to be a tight group of boys and girls who had been together forever. Indeed, three or four of them had started in Walden's nursery school and progressed through every grade to the present.

What struck me most was my classmates' supreme self-assurance. Today we would describe them as "way cool." Some of them, to be sure, carried their self-esteem too far; they were downright snobs, but those few were teased by others in the class for their haughty airs. My precarious adolescent ego was buffeted in measuring myself against my classmates. I felt uncoordinated,

lacking not only physical skills but the social graces as well, and was constantly reminded of the difference between my classmates' world and mine.

In junior high school, I had been heedless of the social and economic disparities among my classmates. Regardless of our backgrounds, most of us seemed to live, as far as I could tell, in various gradations of genteel poverty. That was not true of my Walden classmates. This was, after all, a private school. When I joined my class in early 1948, I became aware that most of my new classmates had a lofty economic status that I did not share. They came for the most part from intact families; their fathers were psychiatrists, lawyers, physicians, businessmen. Most of them lived in expensively decorated apartments with thick wall-to-wall carpeting, heavy drapes on the picture windows, original oils on the walls, baby grand pianos in the living room, and silverplate Ronson lighters on the coffee table. They had weekend homes in Fairfield County, Connecticut or summer homes on Fire Island.

There were keenly-felt cultural gaps as well between my classmates and me. On Monday mornings they returned to school talking of the hit musicals they had seen that weekend on Broadway and singing the songs from those musicals: "Kiss Me Kate," "South Pacific," "Annie Get Your Gun," and others. They shared laughs over the comedy skits they had seen on television two nights earlier, whether it was Sid Caesar and Imogene Coca on "Your Show of Shows," Milton Berle or Jackie Gleason.

I had not seen any of those hit musicals, nor was I familiar with these television shows because there was no television set in our home. When my brother and I saw television at all in those years immediately after the war, we watched it, along with most other New Yorkers, on sets placed in the windows of appliance stores. When I watched television "at home" for the first time, it was in the apartment of a family living in Castle Village, just to the north of the George Washington Bridge; my aunt Steffie was working there as a governess. On a weekend in December 1949, when the family she worked for was away, Steffie invited Ben and me to watch the National Football League championship game between the New York Giants and the Cleveland Browns. For many years now we have taken television for granted as a fixture in our homes, but that was not so in the late 1940's. It was still thought of then as an astounding technological innovation. For Ben and me, as we sat

there in alien surroundings, it was a “miracle” to see professional football players in action, even if only dimly, through a light drizzle of TV “snow.”

My high school classmates were a multi-talented lot, their innate abilities cultivated in their four years at Walden. Several of the girls were at their best in modern dance, moving lithely around the stage in leotard tops and full-flowing black Balenciaga skirts, hair pulled back tightly in ponytails. Others had stirring singing voices or considerable artistic ability. Lacking talent in the arts, still others, girls and boys, found their *métier* in the life of the mind, going on to careers in psychiatry, medical research, academia or, as in my case, the law.

A vibrant and loving family life and a satisfying career were not to be the destiny of every one of us. One girl died of cancer before she was 40. Some 25 years after our graduation, one of the boys died a violent death, a homicide. Another boy, who began high school with us but graduated elsewhere, died as a naval aviator, while attempting a night-time landing on an aircraft carrier. With those exceptions, it was evident from the stories told at our class reunion, 50 years after graduation, that most of us, those who had been granted a normal lifespan, had indeed used our natural gifts to make our way in the world.

Our class of twenty-five boys and girls was a tightly-knit group. Almost every Friday night we socialized, coming together to go to a movie on Broadway, or "dancing cheek-to-cheek" at a party given by one of the girls in their elegant apartments on Central Park West or Riverside Drive. I had "pals" among my classmates, but no real "friends," as I later came to understand that term. The English poet John Donne famously wrote, "No man is an island, entire of itself." In my high school years, I took Donne's injunction to mean that I would have to get along with everyone, or at least to adjust to them, to stay on their good side. It never entered my mind that others could nourish me, that I could draw strength from them and learn from them, and that they in turn would value their companionship with me and draw strength from me. This was beyond my understanding, and would remain so for many decades thereafter. As a teenager, I felt that it was important to be self-sufficient, "entire of itself.." At the same time, it pained me considerably to be an outsider, at the edge of the star diagram, and not in its center.

Standing out in my memory of the four years at Walden are the class trips we took in our second and third years there, the field days, and our graduation.

In our second year, our history teacher, Sherwood Trask, led the class on a four-day trip into southeastern Pennsylvania. It was important to Sherwood that we connect what we were learning that year in our European history class with first-hand evidence of the European influences on American history.

Our first stop was Pottsville, Pennsylvania, our entertainment that Friday evening night a football game between the local high school and Mahanoy City High School. High school football was not new to me: I had watched football games at other New York City prep schools, but nothing prepared us for the spectacle of high-school football as we saw it that night. Pottsville and Mahanoy City were small anthracite coal-mining towns where high-school football was the unifying element and probably the main source of entertainment on fall weekends. As guests of the home team, we stood on the sidelines, next to the players' bench, overwhelmed by the roars of the partisan fans, the cheerleaders, the bands, and the very large players, who looked even larger in shoulder pads and helmets. It was quintessentially American entertainment, having nothing to do with the European influences that were the theme of our trip, but it impressed us as nothing else on that trip did.

On the following day, we traveled westward to Shartlesville, a crossroads hamlet. The bus pulled up to what appeared to be a rundown workingman's bar, with asphalt shingle siding. Entering the tavern, we found ourselves in a dark barroom where a few men were drinking desultorily. Passing through a curtained doorway to the dining room in the rear, we found ourselves in a different world altogether. We were seated at two long tables, which were no more than boards placed side by side over sawhorses. There was no printed menu; instead, the entire selection of food, from appetizer to dessert, was set out on huge platters. We gorged ourselves on the delicious Amish home cooking, ending with the traditional "shoo fly pie and apple pan dowdy."

There were other stops on that trip: the cloisters of the German Baptist Brethren at Ephrata, the battlefield at Gettysburg, an Amish workshop in Lancaster, and, on the way home, the Swedenborgian cathedral in Philadelphia. At each stop, Sherwood lectured us, tying

in what we were seeing in Pennsylvania to our class in European History back home.

In the following year, our junior year, Sherwood guided us on an even more ambitious trip, this time to what remained of the colonial Midwest, specifically the so-called Western Reserve originally owned by the Connecticut colony. The trip began with a visit to Ohio University in Athens, where we were welcomed by the students. At the next stop, in Marietta, we were touring a museum of regional history when a member of the class noticed, in one of the display cabinets, a book of glees dating back to the early 19th century. Then and there, our madrigal group, six or seven strong, formed up around the display case and began singing the four-part glee to which the book was opened:

*To be jovial and gay, to be merry and wise;  
To pass time away, is the boon that I prize,  
With friendship and glee to fill up the span  
Is the life that suits me, and I will if I can.*

From Marietta our itinerary took us to Chillicothe, famous for its Indian burial mounds, and then to Malabar Farm, the gentleman's farm owned by Louis Bromfield, an author then well-known and now all-but-forgotten. The next day, we toured the B. F. Goodrich rubber plant in Akron, watching as workmen poured the molten liquefied rubber into molds, then followed the assembly line to the point where the finished tires came out, ready for delivery. Then it was on to Cleveland, spending an evening at Karamu House, an interracial settlement house. Here boys and girls our age, all of them black, put on a modern dance recital in our honor. The trip ended with a visit to the Harley School, an independent school in Rochester, New York.

Another highlight each year at Walden was the field day, held on a cinder running track at a Riverside Park stadium. For that event, the high school was divided into four teams: Blue, White, Red and Green. In keeping with Walden's egalitarian philosophy, no one could be left on the bench; every member of the team had to be entered in at least one event. Each team was also expected to compose an original song to be sung by the entire team, and points were awarded for the best song and the runner-up. One year my team gained first prize in the song competition with a clever adaptation of a Bach Chorale, "*Jesu, meine Freude*." Another year, on

the White team, our anthem was sung to the martial rhythms of the French Christmas carol, "*Ce matin, j'ai rencontré le train*" and ending :

*White Team's men will do their best  
To be victorious in this great test.*

In our final year, in the interval between final exams and graduation, we put on our senior play, a work traditionally written, produced, directed and acted by members of the senior class. The play was a series of scenes tied together by a common theme. One segment, a take-off on old Western movies, was set in a barroom where the time-honored confrontation between the sheriff and the black-hatted outlaws was to take place. The focal point of the barroom was to be the bar placed against the back wall of the stage.

As each of us undertook to do what our talents directed us to, I volunteered to do the stage set. Perhaps I had seen in some Hollywood western a scene set in just such a barroom, where the mural over the bar featured a reclining nude, reminiscent of the lush nudes of Goya, Manet and Renoir. Feeling that, for the sake of "authenticity," this barroom scene needed to include such a figure, I proceeded to paint this odalisque in gaudy tempera colors. I showed her reclining seductively on a sofa, facing the viewer, her thick black hair trailing in strands across the cushion. The odalisque's right arm was stretched languidly along the back of the couch, while her left hand, the arm bent at the elbow, supported her head. When the curtain opened on that scene, my mural was over the bar, in full view of the audience.

As a 17-year-old boy, I had no intimate knowledge of the female form. I had seen a nude woman only once, and that ever-so-briefly, a glimpse of a model posing for a life-painting class at the Art Students League. My scanty knowledge of nude females came primarily from seeing paintings on museum walls or in books. On a shelf in Mother's library was a folio of American art which included a reproduction of Thomas Hart Benton's "Persephone": the beautiful woman, nude, lies asleep under a tree, a picnic basket at her side, while the elderly farmer in overalls spies at her from behind the tree.<sup>187</sup> With a young boy's curiosity, I had many times opened the book to that painting. As I recall, after so many peeks, the book opened automatically to that page.

My limited acquaintance with the female body did not deter me from painting the back-of-the-bar nude. After appraising my

almost-finished work, I decided that modesty dictated a covering over Olympia's loins. So, in quick strokes with an almost-dry brush, I painted a diaphanous cloth across her hips, such as the one "*worn by the nymph Dione, which neither hides nor reveals the parts that shame naturally covers.*"<sup>188</sup> After all, had not Rubens, Raphael and the other Old Masters provided just such a covering for their Venuses and Dianas?

My mural provoked many favorable comments and some snide ones as well. My cousin Frank Wolff, who was in the audience, said pointedly that I "intended [the loin covering] not so much to cover up her shame but his ignorance." I joined in the general laughter at Frank's *bon mot*, while inwardly cringing at its truth.

A few days later we graduated from Walden, saying our goodbyes to each other and to our teachers. Most of my classmates I would not see again until the fiftieth reunion. When that reunion took place in 2001, my classmates and I had gray hair or white hair, or no hair at all, sagging jowls instead of the tight jaw lines of fifty years earlier, and, perhaps, more weight than we cared to admit to. We had experienced in the fifty years since high school the joy and pain, triumph and disappointment that are the lot of each one of us as we pass through life. Still, in most of the men and women in that room, I found satisfaction with the lives they had led, eyes still bright with pleasure at being in this place with former classmates, and a spirit of hopefulness that life offered still more of enjoyment than of pain in the years ahead.

We nodded our heads in agreement when Jonathan Steinberg stood up at the Reunion and said that our experience at Walden reflected those times—the turbulent years immediately after World War II—and the progressive educational thinking that was a product of that time. We agreed with Jon, too, that, because of the changes in American culture in the past fifty years, our Walden experience of many years ago could not be duplicated today.

## THE ENCAMPMENT FOR CITIZENSHIP — AND AFTER

**L**ucile Kohn was much more to me than high school chairman and Latin teacher. I have already written of her role in guiding me in my choice of colleges. In the summer of 1949, Lucile had arranged an appointment for Mother to the staff of the Encampment for Citizenship (EFC). Now, in 1951, Lucile took charge again, getting me accepted as a camper there. As in so many other of my life's endeavors, Fortuna was smiling on me that summer. Everything I had heard about the Encampment suggested that this would be a more rewarding way to spend the summer before college than working as a stock clerk, inventory taker or envelope stuffer, or any of the other low-paying soul-deadening jobs that I might have been forced to take. It proved to be all that I hoped it would be, and much more.

The Encampment for Citizenship was the realization of a dream for Algernon Black, a leader of New York's Ethical Culture Society. It was his aim, a manifestation of the high hopes that prevailed in the immediate postwar period, to train the new generation of young people in political action, in working for civil rights for those who had been denied them, and in leadership. As the name implied, the Encampment grew out of Al Black's belief that it was every citizen's obligation to become active in working toward the solution of the problems besetting our society. We hear much less of that among teenagers and young adults in today's laid-back environment. Some school systems today make community service a requirement for graduation, compelling students to participate in such activities, but for the most part there is no passion in it. Some high school teens

are attracted to social service and other good causes, but there is no sweeping fervor for working toward underlying social change. Teenagers are not caught up in the mass social and political movements as young people were in the 1940's and 50's.

On the Riverdale campus of the Fieldston School, a private school affiliated with the New York Ethical Culture Society, the Encampment brought together young men and women from all over the United States for six weeks of lectures, workshops and field trips. New York City and its surroundings were an invaluable resource for this purpose.

Having just turned 17, I was very much the junior of the other EFC'ers, some of whom had already graduated from college the preceding June. My age proved to be irrelevant. The Encampment was for me a life-changing experience; indeed, it was one of the high points in my life. About eighty of us lived and ate together, learned and worked together, argued with one another and fell in love. There were even those who met at EFC and later married, crossing the cultural divides that would have separated them had they met elsewhere.

We slept in double-decker bunks in the school classrooms, men on one floor, women on the other. After breakfast we would gather on the meadow that sloped in a bowl down to the angle formed by the classroom building on the left and the gymnasium on the right. The EFC "faculty" and guest speakers stood on the flagstone patio there to deliver their lectures, while we students sat on that lawn, basking in the sun or seeking the shade of the maples that dotted the green.

Reflecting the political orientation of Al Black and his staff, our instruction at these morning lectures was very much in the political mainstream: how to organize at the grass-roots level for political action, the struggle for equal rights for Negroes, the plight of the rural poor and the nation's workingmen, and so on. There were some noticeable gaps: for example, we heard nothing on the protection of the environment. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* had not yet been written and another 27 years would pass before America would become aware of the ecological disaster at the Love Canal. Back in 1951, we were for the most part unaware of the damage to our health that the nation's industries were causing by befouling our air and water. Nor were we trained at the Encampment in the

techniques of non-violent passive resistance that were even then beginning to be used to lower the bars of racial segregation.

Some of the lectures were stimulating and provocative, others were sleep-inducing. One staff member, Bert James Loewenberg, was a history professor at Sarah Lawrence College. His lectures, dense with fact and theory, made no concessions to the informal atmosphere in which they were given. When campers complained that his lectures were "over their heads," he retorted, "I'm lecturing to where your heads ought to be." How fortunate for Professor Loewenberg that he taught in an age before students routinely graded their professors, those grades used to determine whether a professor was granted tenure or was moved up the academic ladder, and before every idle remark from the lectern was scrutinized for its latent "isms," its power implications and possible injury to individuals claiming to be "disenfranchised."

Many of our days at EFC were spent in field trips, to get first-hand information from public figures who were every day grappling with the issues that we were hearing about in the balmy setting of the Fieldston School. There were visits to the offices of one of the reform Democratic clubs that were then trying to unseat Tammany Hall, the New York Democratic machine, and to the New York offices of the United Nations, then at Lake Success on Long Island. At Freedom House, on 40th Street just south of Bryant Park, its director told us of its role as a clearinghouse for and supporter of worldwide efforts to extend the reach of democracy and civil liberties.<sup>189</sup> His soft monotone and the insistent hum of the window airconditioners, then beginning to be used in Manhattan offices, had a soporific effect on me; I had often to shake myself out of what could have become a deep sleep.

We also visited Eleanor Roosevelt at Val-Kill, the cottage near Hyde Park that she had built in her husband's lifetime to get away from the suffocating atmosphere of the Roosevelt estate and from her domineering mother-in-law.<sup>190</sup> It was to Val-Kill that she had retreated after her husband's death in April 1945. In my mind's eye, I see her still on that warm summer day, wearing a colorful floral print dress, seated on a low fieldstone retaining wall with the cottage at her back, while we sat or knelt at her feet. On that warm July afternoon in Hyde Park, Mrs. Roosevelt gave us a pep-talk on our responsibilities in the brave new post-war world. The words

were nothing memorable; it was the image, not the substance, that made the lasting impression.

As young people in our late teens and early 20's, we knew the First Lady as President Roosevelt's sturdy help-meet during the war; for her public appearances at coal mines, day care centers, schools and war production plants; and for championing human rights for the downtrodden around the world. When we met her in 1951, she was the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. Three years earlier, in December 1948, she had succeeded by dint of her personal leadership and magnetism in pushing through the first Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We knew nothing of the alleged same-sex and opposite-sex attractions and dalliances which became public only decades after her death. Even if we had known of them, they would not have diminished our admiration for the former First Lady.

Those who attended the Encampment that summer were remarkable in their diversity and in how they came together around their common agenda. There were whites and blacks from the South, Latinos from the Rio Grande Valley, Native Americans from Colorado, and working class people from the Midwest, as well as a large contingent from New England and New York. I was impressed by their record of accomplishments, even though they were still in college or just out of college. Richard Givens was an officer and later president of Students for Democratic Action, the affiliate of Americans for Democratic Action. Richard Shore's ambition was to be a producer and director of documentaries; he later achieved that ambition, becoming an Emmy Award-winning cinematographer. David McDaniel Simms, as a black teenager attending Virginia Union College in Richmond, his hometown, had participated in a sit-in at the Woolworth lunch counter there, nine years before the more-famous sit-ins at the Woolworth's in Greensboro, North Carolina. My fellow-Encampers were generally liberal Democrats, as I was; there were not, to my knowledge, any radical *agents provocateurs* among them.

One girl was whispered about at EFC not for her achievements before coming to the Encampment but for her activities there. Jane was a white girl from the Midwest, her light brown hair cut in a page-boy bob with bangs over her forehead. She had mottled skin, sad blue eyes and a perpetual hangdog look. It seems to have been her mission, her contribution to the betterment of what was then

called “intergroup relations,” to provide pleasure to the black EFC’ers, at least to those who chose to avail themselves of it. White women who pursued black men were a familiar phenomenon in New York City’s left-wing scene in the late 40’s and early 50’s; I had encountered them at rallies and social functions that I had attended. Some years later, I saw in *The Bosses’ Songbook*<sup>191</sup> a song that reminded me of those women and of Jane. A parody of the old popular song, “They Go Wild Over Me,” this one was called the “Left Wing Negro’s Song”:

*All the leftists go wild over me*  
*From the ADA [Americans for Democratic Action]*  
*clear over to CP [the Communist Party] . . .*  
*They go wild, simply wild, over me.*

Jane’s trysting bower was said to be the roof of the Fieldston School classroom building, away from the prying eyes of those who remained downstairs. One youth stood at the bottom of the stairs to admit those who were “eligible” and keep everyone else away. Did the young African-American men climb the stairs first-come-first-served or draw lots, or was it simply at random? Did any of those who were offered her services decline them? I had no first-hand knowledge of any of this, learning of it only afterward from one who did.

For me, the most important person at EFC was Iris Elaine Smith, my first love. Iris was petite and slim, about 5’2”, with tightly-curled auburn hair, sparkling chestnut eyes and a wide mouth framing a smile that lit her whole face. What drew me to her were her exuberance, her infectious good spirits, her melodious Tidewater Virginia accent and her lack of affectation. She was utterly different from the cool self-possessed girls I had known in high school. Not the least of her fine qualities was her egalitarian and progressive outlook, particularly on race relations. Hers was far from the keep-them-in-their-place mentality that a Northerner might have expected at that time from someone of her background.

As I was powerfully drawn to Iris, so was she to me, and soon we were spending all our time together. We stayed at each other’s side from breakfast time through the whole day and on into the evening. By coincidence, the radio was playing that summer an Eddy Arnold song that seemed to speak to me in its cornball but heartfelt way:

*They took a bundle of bright southern sunshine  
And for a heart they used a rose,  
The blue of her eyes they stole from the skies  
And honeysuckle vine from head to toe  
They made her sweeter than sweetest of sweet things  
And then said that she could be mine,  
I'll always be in love with this angel from above  
She's my bundle of Southern sunshine.<sup>192</sup>*

As I said, the Encampment was a place where two people who ordinarily would never have crossed paths not only met but also formed intense relationships, sometimes for life. Iris was at EFC because Joella Richardson, her friend and classmate at Greensboro College, had attended EFC the year before and had met and married a Jewish boy from New York who had also been there that summer. So, except that it didn't end the same way, history was repeating itself with Iris and me.

Iris was 21 when we met, I was 17. She had graduated from college that June; I had not even started at Cornell. She was from Holdcroft, Virginia, little more than a post office at a crossroads in Charles City County, just up the James River from Williamsburg, I was a callow Jewish kid from Manhattan. Iris was a staunch Methodist, had worked summers as a secretary in her local church and was to return to the church full-time that fall. We were different on every count except the one that mattered at the time, the powerful chemistry that pulls two people irresistibly together.

Any doubts as to her feelings for me were dispelled early in the summer when it was announced that there was to be an auction of items donated by fellow Encampers, the proceeds going to charity. Iris decided to "contribute" a pair of her silk ivory-colored panties, the hems edged in delicate tatting adorned with little pink rosebuds and pale green "leaves." She told me in advance that they were hers, but no one else knew. The night of the auction, when the panties were brought out of their box and waved in front of the crowd, everyone whooped with laughter, enjoying the joke immensely. I jumped in with the first bid and matched my competitors bid for bid. Soon I had reached my limit and would have lost the auction had Iris not assured me that the panties were going to be mine regardless of the price. So, with her help, I continually upped my bid. In the end, to the laughter and applause of the other EFC'ers in

the room, my bid carried the day. I took away that intimate lingerie, treasuring it not so much as a trophy of the auction but more so as tangible evidence of Iris's affection for me.

On other nights, Iris and I walked the cool tree-lined streets of Riverdale, or found a secluded area behind the school for our ardent lovemaking. Neither of us asked for, nor expected, a commitment from the other, but she was foremost in my affections and I in hers.

That summer of 1951 was a season of love in an idyllic setting, a time when warm friendships were formed, a time when I felt secure as a member of a cohesive group, all with similar motivations and ideals, there to express and to build upon those ideals. Such moments do not come often in anyone's life. I was privileged and fortunate that they came into mine.

*"All too soon, we had to part . . ."*<sup>193</sup> So goes the popular song. At summer's end, Iris and I went our separate ways, she to Charles City and her job at the Methodist church, I to pack my clothes for college and head for Cornell's three-day freshman orientation camp near Sayre, Pennsylvania. The parting, we assured each other, was to be temporary only; we would keep in touch through the mails and frequent visits, even though we were now to be separated by almost five hundred miles.

At that distance, our romance, if it was to continue, could only be carried on by letter, and so it was. Long-distance telephone calls were expensive. Besides, Iris's phone was on a party line. That discouraged us from using it for the expression of romantic sentiments. Once at Cornell, lonesome and having difficulty in adjusting to this big university, I looked forward every day to opening the pale blue lavender-scented envelopes that arrived in the mail and reading her lengthy letters, written in blue ink in a flowing feminine hand. Iris often enclosed a syndicated feature clipped from the Richmond Times-Dispatch comics page, poems that expressed treacly sentiments of love, companionship, jealousy and other human emotions. Even though I saw how trite were the sentiments that these poems expressed, they appealed to the romantic in me, seeming to give words to our feelings for each other. For me, "absence truly made the heart grow fonder" and "distance only lent enchantment"; I would have denied vigorously the contradictory maxim, "Out of sight, out of mind." Iris was very much on my

mind, so much so that, while the relationship lasted, I could not bring myself to “get serious” with any women at Cornell.

When Iris invited me down to her house for Thanksgiving in November 1951, I quickly agreed, even though it required a long bus ride from Ithaca. My family would not miss me. Having arrived in America later in life, my kin did not celebrate the traditional American Thanksgiving. In November 1937, just weeks after my grandparents’ arrival in America, a friend of theirs, the sculptor Malvina Hoffman, delivered a gift basket at their door, containing a large uncooked turkey with all the fixings: stuffing, corn bread muffins, black-eyed peas and apple pie. The prospect of roasting the enormous bird so daunted Grandmother that she gave it over to the building superintendent. In the years since 1937, Thanksgiving had not much grown in importance to our family. Consequently, I felt no qualms about spending that holiday with Iris instead.

After three bus changes, I arrived at the crossroads where U.S. 60, the four-lane road running southeast from Richmond to Hampton, meets Sandy Point Road, the country road heading south toward the James River. I was for the first time in Tidewater Virginia, the flat alluvial plain stretching eastward for miles from the rolling hills of the Piedmont to the Atlantic Ocean, a featureless landscape of scrub pine, white oak marshes and wheatfields. When the bus dropped me off at that country crossroads, Iris was waiting for me, leaning against the fender of her 1950 butterscotch-colored Chevrolet. We embraced, I got into the car, and we drove the 15 minutes to her home, where I was to meet her family. On the way, we passed first through Ruthville, a Negro settlement founded by freed blacks before the Civil War and probably the largest village in the County, and then through Holdcroft, Iris’s post office address, just a crossroads with a gas station and a general store, the post office window at the rear of the store.

A few more turns in the road brought us to the plain white shingle farmhouse that was Iris’s home. Outside was a weathered garage, painted barn-red, and next to it an old see-through gas pump topped by the red Texaco star. Rusty cars and pick-up trucks were parked here and there on the rutted dirt driveway.

Once past the homestead, two more turns in the road would bring us to the banks of the James River, flowing from its headwaters in Central Virginia in an ever-stronger current toward its mouth at Hampton Roads. It was on these shores, scarcely a mile

from Iris's house, that the storied Chief Powhatan had his camp and it was here that his daughter, Pocahontas, was said to have saved the life of Captain John Smith.

Iris's father, a latter-day John Smith, made his living as a commercial fisherman, regularly fishing the James River in his trawler. I sometimes saw him on workdays, in his boots and overalls, coming home at noontime to have lunch in the kitchen with his wife. When he had finished his meal and rose from the table, his Negro crew came through the screen door into the kitchen and sat down, taking their food from the steaming platters that Iris's mother brought to the table.

The scene at the Smiths' Thanksgiving dinnertable the day after my arrival calls to mind that Iowa Thanksgiving dinner in the 1977 film, "Annie Hall." Seeing the film, years after the events described here, I could identify with the Alvy Singer character played by Woody Allen. As he sat at the bounteous Thanksgiving dinner table with Annie Hall, his non-Jewish girlfriend, and her middle-America family, Alvy pictured himself as a black-garbed Chasid. That, at least, was how he imagined that Annie's family saw him. Similarly, Iris's family treated me very well, showing me every courtesy, but they could be pardoned if, looking at me, they might have thought to themselves: "He's certainly not one of us!" I didn't need a black frock, beard and *payis* (earlocks) to send that message.

Iris's father sat at the head of the Thanksgiving table. He was of medium height, stocky, with thick black curly hair and dark eyes, his face deeply tanned and seamed by that lifetime of outdoor work as a waterman. On that holiday, he was wearing, instead of his usual work clothes, his navy blue Sunday go-to-church suit, white shirt and tie. His wife, Edna, sat facing her husband at the other end of the table. Also at the table were Iris and I, her two older brothers, her two younger sisters and Betty, a teenage girl unrelated to the Smiths who was the same age as Iris's younger sister. The Smiths had taken Betty in because she could not be raised by her own parents.

On Thanksgiving morning, Iris and I and her family attended services at the Memorial Methodist Church in Charles City. There were three churches for whites in Charles City County: Episcopal, Methodist and Baptist, in that hierarchical order. The wealthier folks who lived in the big plantation houses along the James River belonged to the Episcopal church, in colonial times

the state church of Virginia. Iris's church was the largest in the county. It drew middle-class farmers and businessmen as parishioners. Lower-status whites worshipped at the two white Baptist churches in the County. There were also ten black Baptist churches in Charles City County, evidence of blacks' numerical predominance over whites in Tidewater Virginia.

The parish church where Iris and her family worshipped was a redbrick building with white doors, white window trim and shutters and a white spire. From the spire sounded a carillon, not from cast bronze bells but from records played on the church office phonograph. The building had been erected only a few years before my arrival in 1951, after the older white clapboard church had been destroyed in a fire.

Even though church-going was new to me, I felt no discomfort there. It seemed almost welcoming to me, as if I fit in instead of being an outsider. I came to have great respect for Iris's pastor, the Rev. Alexander B. Berry, Jr. He called himself a simple country preacher, deprecating his intellect, but he had a generous soul and went out of his way to be kind to me. Whenever Iris told him in advance that I was coming down, he tried to make me feel at ease in alien surroundings by omitting the usual last line of every prayer, "In Jesus' name we pray," and by selecting hymns that praised God but made no mention of Jesus as Savior or Son of God. So, on that Thanksgiving Thursday, the congregation sang

*Come ye thankful people come,  
Raise the song of harvest home  
All is safely gathered in, ere the winter storms begin.*

and

*Bringing in the sheaves,  
bringing in the sheaves,  
We shall come rejoicing,  
bringing in the sheaves.*

A historical aside: despite the claims made by the Pilgrims' descendants, Virginians firmly believe that the earliest Thanksgiving, earlier by a year than the one celebrated at Plymouth, was celebrated at Berkeley Plantation in Charles City County, not far from the Methodist church. On arriving at Berkeley on December

4, 1619 on the “Margaret,” Captain John Woodlief and his men held a short religious service, and ordained

*that the Day of our ship arrival at the place assigned for the plantation in the land of Virginia shall be yearly and perpetually kept holy as a day of Thanksgiving to Almighty God.*<sup>194</sup>

A monument marks the spot at Berkeley Plantation where that landing took place.

On returning from church, the Smith family and I sat down to the traditional Thanksgiving dinner of roast turkey and ham basted with pineapple sauce, sweet potatoes topped with marshmallows, and collard greens, with pecan pie for dessert. If it wasn’t Thanksgiving dinner with Annie Hall and her family, then it was very much the Thanksgiving dinner that Norman Rockwell had painted in his famous cover illustration for the *Saturday Evening Post* magazine.

After dinner, Iris and I drove to the movies in Williamsburg, a twenty-minute drive to the east on the far side of the Chickahominy River. At that time, in November 1951, Williamsburg bore hardly any resemblance to what it has become. To be sure, it already had a historic designation dating back to the 1930’s, but the great transformation that it was to receive through the bounty of the Rockefeller Foundation had not yet begun. Every building, from the Governor’s Palace to the humblest shop, had a dilapidated look, as if fixed in an immutable state of seediness. Its main thoroughfare, Duke of Gloucester Street, looked like small town Main Streets all over the country, bespeaking a time then already long past. Williamsburg was the main commercial hub of the tri-county area (Charles City, James City and York) but, except in the minds of colonial historians and preservationists, it did not then have a hold on the American imagination. I’m not even sure that the buildings so important to Colonial America, which were to become a must-see for tourists in the years ahead, were then open to visitors. If lay people outside of Williamsburg knew of the place at all, it was because of William and Mary College and its Christopher Wren architecture.

Standing in front of the theatre after the movie ended, ice cream cone in hand, I could not have imagined a Williamsburg crowded with tourists, arriving by car, chartered motorcoach and airplane, the Mecca of endless package tours, the artisans in colonial costume

plying their crafts, the reconstructed open carriages transporting visitors from one end of the street to the other. Even less could I have foreseen the opening, not far from Williamsburg, of Busch Gardens and its related amusement parks.

Back at Iris's house after dinner that evening, we made idle conversation with her parents until they went upstairs to bed. Her brothers and sisters had gone out to visit friends; only we remained downstairs in the parlor. Scarcely had we heard the last footfall on the top stair when we were stretched out together on the sofa, our bodies and lips glued one to the other, and our ardent lovemaking began. John and Edna Smith showed great discretion and consideration for their daughter in allowing her and her boyfriend this time of privacy in their own home. Years later, when my own daughter reached that age, I'm not sure I could have done the same.

That weekend, we made plans to get together again in New York City the very next month, between Christmas and New Year's. Did Iris tell her parents where she was going? I'm sure she did. Did she ask their permission? I am sure she did not. She was, to use the expression common in those days but no longer heard today, "free, white and twenty-one." She was also mature and responsible for her age. When, on my part, I told Mother that I might be out all night and not return until morning, what were her thoughts? If she had concerns about the growing intensity of my relationship with Iris, she never expressed them to me.

Iris would need a hotel room in New York for the few days she would be in the city. From some alien sense of propriety and a misreading of Iris's intentions, I had reserved a room for her at the Bristol Hotel on 49th Street between Sixth Avenue and Seventh. The Bristol was considered a "safe" hotel for single women, requiring visitors to show proof of registration before they could go upstairs. When I met her outside the hotel the next morning, Iris was in tears, angry with me for booking that room and angry at the hotel as well. Not knowing of the hotel's restrictions on visitors, she had planned to spend the night with me, and that horrible straight-laced hotel had made that impossible.

Eager to make Iris happy and anticipating my own pleasure as well, I booked for the next night a single room at the Hotel Chesterfield, also on 49th Street across from the Bristol. The Chesterfield had no interest in monitoring its overnight guests. They came and went freely, as at most other hotels, enabling us to

spend the night together free from the censorious looks of disapproving desk clerks.

Like many other hotels of that vintage, the Chesterfield had a facade of buff-colored brick. The name of the hotel, in large red neon letters, was mounted vertically against the facade and perpendicularly to it so that it could be seen by those approaching from east or west. The tiny room that I had rented, the least expensive that the hotel offered, was on the second floor, the “D” in that “Chesterfield” sign just outside its window. In that grubby room with its narrow brown iron bedstead, Iris and I slept together for the first time. After we turned off the lights, the room was dark but for the light from that “D.” Filtered through the venetian blinds, it cast a slatted ruddy glow over the bedstead and over the two of us.

It is said that you always remember your “first time.” Books have been written on the subject, celebrities recalling, years later, that transforming event in their lives. In a sly reference to the first sexual experience, an advertising campaign for a well-known beer has used that phrase as a tag line: “You never forget your first . . .” For me, though, the details of that night have disappeared in the mists of time, more evidence, if any is needed, that the memories you most want to retain fade away while what you think at the time to be the inconsequential detritus of your life leaves a lasting impression. So, if I leave out the details of that night, it is not to draw a curtain of discretion over it, but because Mnemosyne has herself drawn a veil over it, preventing me from recalling as vividly as I would wish to the experience of that first night together.

Unexpectedly, I had an opportunity to see Iris again in March 1952. A notice on a Cornell University bulletin board announced that an exchange visit was being planned to the campus of Hampton Institute, a historically black college in Hampton, Virginia. Cornell and Hampton were paired as sister institutions. As Hampton was but an hour’s drive from Iris’s home, I quickly saw the possibilities for a paid-for trip to see Iris, and volunteered. The Cornell delegation drove down in an old Chevy coupe, so beat-up that the floorboards had rotted out. Crammed into the rear bench seat behind the driver, I could look down through a hole in the rusted floorboard and see the road pavement whizzing past beneath my feet.

Hampton Institute, now Hampton University, has a beautiful campus, its expansive green lawns sloping gradually down to the water's edge. When our Cornell delegation arrived in that old jalopy, we found that, in this southerly latitude, winter had already receded, yielding to the warmth of spring. The entire campus was decked out in tulips and flowering shrubs. Iris drove down to Hampton to meet me. Although she had spent most of her life in segregated schools, she showed no discomfort in mingling socially with our gracious hosts, the black students at Hampton. It would have surprised me had it been otherwise, because she had willingly signed up for that special summer at the Encampment in a racially-integrated setting. A day or two before the trip was to have ended, Iris and I ducked out of Hampton and drove back to Charles City in her Chevy. I stayed there with her for two happy days before I met up with my fellow-students again as they headed north to Richmond on Route 60.

There were other such weekends as well. On one of them, Iris and I drove to a county fair in neighboring New Kent County. County fairs in those days were not the sanitized affairs that they are today. They were a magnet for grifters and other seedy characters pushing their special cons, out to separate the rubes from their money. Encountering for the first time that classic con, the shell game, I was one of those rubes, losing twenty dollars in just a few minutes before realizing that I would never recoup my losses. I finally walked away, long after I should have, embarrassed at having been played for a sucker.

At that fair, too, I saw my first old-fashioned strip show. As Iris and I stood outside the tent and read the placards advertising the charms of the performers, she blushed, smiled disarmingly and urged me to see the show. We would hook up again when it was over. Leaving Iris to wander among the more conventional attractions, I paid my two dollars, the barker held the tent flap aside and I stepped into the tent and took my seat on one of the hay-bale "bleachers." Inside, all eyes were on Queenie, the beauty of the burlesque show, as she went into her bump-and-grind routine and did the most amazing things with her body! Soon Queenie was down to a fringed G-string and the pink pasties with tassels on 'em. Then came the moment all the good ol' boys wuz waitin' fer. Queenie started contractin' this muscle and that one, and before long she set those tassels a-twirlin' in opposite dee-rec-shuns! Every

eye in the place was fixed on those gyratin' tassels! The good ol' boys in the tent loved it. They hooted and whistled and stomped their feet in appreciation. When the music ended and Queenie retired behind the curtain, I stumbled out of the tent, shaking my head in amazement at that performance, and found Iris at our pre-arranged rendezvous.

In May 1952, Iris came up to Cornell for Spring Weekend. I had reserved one of the guest bedrooms on the top-most floor of Willard Straight Hall, the student union, rooms long since converted into offices for student organizations. This time, there was no misunderstanding between us as to where she and I would spend the night, and no hawk-eyed room clerk at the front desk to frustrate our intentions. By day, we picnicked at Taughannock Falls State Park with another couple, watched the floats go by at the Spring Weekend parade and attended the big dance at Barton Hall on Saturday night. Separating from the other weekenders, we also visited the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station at the edge of the campus and watched as bulls and cows engaged in activities designed to "improve the breed."

Real life intruded; the good times were not to last. Our romantic idyll foundered on the jagged rocks of our different faiths. More than once, Iris and I had talked about religion. In the end it was to be the chief obstacle to a life together, one that we could not overcome. In observance of Rosh Hashanah, 1952, we had attended services at a Conservative synagogue in Richmond. I had the feeling, though we didn't talk it through, that she found it strange and strenuous, with all that standing up and sitting down, so very different from the one-hour Sunday church services that she was used to. The traditional service tests the endurance even of lifelong Jews who understand it and know what to expect. For one who was not a part of that tradition, who had never even been in a synagogue before, and certainly not to a Rosh Hashanah service, it had to be both bewildering and exhausting.

There was no desire on Iris's part to convert, nor had I any wish to force it upon her. Although she did not trumpet her faith and was no proselytizing fundamentalist, she was a rock-solid Christian. As a constant reminder and declaration of her faith, she wore around her neck a chain from which hung a mustard seed embedded in Lucite, recalling Jesus' admonition to his disciples: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed . . ." <sup>195</sup> It would have

required a gut-wrenching decision on her part to convert to Judaism, one that she was not prepared to make. For me, conversion to Christianity was unthinkable.

The denouement occurred over the Christmas holidays in 1952. Iris and I were sitting in my apartment at 11 Seaman Avenue when she pressed me to tell her what my intentions were regarding our relationship. Did we have a future together, she wanted to know. I was not surprised by the question or put off by it. After all, she was already 22. At 18, I could not conceive of marriage, could not even look beyond the end of the present school year. But it was transparently clear to me that, when I was finally prepared to marry, it would not be to her, and I had to tell her so. Here, in an instant, at the threshold of adulthood, I turned away from a life-path that would have been very different from the one I chose to embark upon.

I thought at the time that our religious differences were the major obstacle to our marriage, but there was more to it than that. The small differences between us, minor issues such as her taste in clothes and the very lack of big-city sophistication that had first drawn me to her at the Encampment, these were magnified many times over as I confronted the possibility of a lifetime commitment to her.

As neither of us was willing to douse that bright flame then and there, Iris and I continued to write each other. In one such letter, she had casually mentioned Albert Wobie, a young man with whom she had grown up in Charles City. While serving in the US Army in Korea, he had been taken prisoner by the North Koreans and had been interned for several months in a POW camp. Iris wrote me that Albert had been released in a prisoner exchange and was coming home, before the war's end. Despite the apparently offhand way in which she mentioned him, I saw the handwriting on the wall. I am certain that she meant for me to receive the between-the-lines message that she conveyed.

Not long after, I received the dreaded letter telling me that she was engaged to Albert and that they would marry shortly. On receiving that letter, I went to my room and cried inconsolably. While feeling sorry for myself, I had also to remember that I was the one who had precipitated the break-up. Having made clear to Iris that there was no future for the two of us, who was I to mourn the end of the affair? Ah, yes, as love itself sometimes defies

explanation, so, too, do the complicated emotions that attend its termination.

In calmer moments, I recognized that this new relationship was much the best thing for Iris, because there were not between her and Albert the chasms that she and I would have had to bridge. They were totally suited to each other by religion, education and common culture. I pictured them together at the altar at the Methodist church in Charles City, Iris in her wedding gown, the Reverend Mr. Berry officiating. It seemed right that it should work out that way. Certainly, it was a relief to Iris's family. They had let us know, not directly but their meaning was plain enough, that marriage between us was not a good idea. They reminded Iris that it's "better to be unhappy single than unhappy married." Since both our last names began with an S, they had also invoked an old Southern folk-rhyme: "A change in the name but not in the letter is a change for the worse and not for the better." That dire prediction was now avoided when she took her new married name, Wobie.

In the midst of my funk, my cousin Frank Wolff, 26 years older than I and playing the role that my father might have played had he lived, forcefully urged me to pull my socks up, so to speak. He took me aside and said, "You know, Daniel, in my time there was a popular German song, a tango: '*Man liebt nur ein Mal*' ("You only love once")."<sup>196</sup> Don't you believe it," he said. "There'll be other loves in your life, so pull yourself together." I could see that he was right, however much pain I was feeling at the time. After all, I was only 18; my life lay ahead of me. Mourning a lost love was emotional capital poorly spent.

I didn't realize it then, but, in addition to the rich store of memories it provided, my romance with Iris was of great value to me for other reasons, too. Iris was an intelligent woman, plainspoken and without airs, with a fine sense of humor. She never felt the need to mask her emotions. Knowing her clarified for me the qualities I would seek in a wife. Coming to know her family, even though only for a few days, was equally valuable. While very much aware of the larger world, they lived much as their forebears had, stretching back across the generations, bound to the land and waters of their native Virginia and the rhythms of the seasons and drawing spiritual sustenance from them. I admired them for their simple and unaffected life and respected them for their strong unquestioning faith.

From the time that Iris passed out of my life until I started dating Ruthie, my future wife, there were women in my life whom I cared for with varying depths of intensity. Some of these relationships were emotionally satisfying, and I hope it was so for the women as well, but I did not seriously consider marrying any of them until I met Ruthie. She was everything I hoped to find in a wife. To ask her to marry me didn't feel forced, like a hurdle to overcome, the words sticking in the throat. For the first time, I proposed marriage wittingly and with the full intention to do so, instead of being swept toward it as if in a floodtide. Proposing marriage to Ruthie was the best decision I ever made.

A wise woman, her name proclaiming her wisdom, has aptly said: "*A man should not be judged by the first woman he falls in love. He should be judged by the last woman he falls in love with.*"<sup>197</sup> I hope and ask to be judged by that standard.

## "BRIGHT COLLEGE YEARS"

My 45th Cornell Alumni Reunion was held June 9-11, 2000. I missed it, as I had missed every earlier college reunion but one. I had not made reservations for this one in advance because our daughter, Julia, was expecting her third child the same weekend, a more important event, certainly, than the Reunion. As it happened, grandson Ezra Joseph Loeb was born on June 4, 2000. We celebrated his *bris* (ritual circumcision) on Sunday, June 11, so it would have been impossible to attend the reunion.

Events elsewhere also prevented me from attending my 30th Reunion, in June 1985. My wife Ruthie had loaded our suitcases into the car; I was at the door of our house on Alden Avenue in New Haven, the key already turning in the lock. A minute later and we would have been on our way. Inside the house, the telephone was ringing. I quickly unlocked the door, opened it, and ran to get the phone before the ringing stopped. It was Aunt Judith, telling me that Grandmother had died earlier that morning. So we abruptly changed our plans: instead of heading for Ithaca, we went southward to New York City and to the apartment on 1781 Riverside Drive to pay our final respects to the woman who had been so important in my life.

I had not been a frequent visitor to Cornell since I graduated, returning only three times in forty-five years: once for a Reunion, once on a "college prospecting" weekend with my wife and older son, George, and once on a football weekend, Yale playing Cornell, with our younger son, Noah, then a Yale ballboy.

In the past decade, however, I have returned for both my 50th and my 55th reunions. Always, on these visits, I am overcome, as are so many returning alumni and visitors, by the beauty of the campus and its surroundings. In recent years that pristine setting has been diminished by ugly brute-modern classroom buildings. But the hills, the valleys, the sun setting across the lake, these no wealthy donor or benighted college administrator can despoil, and enough of the older Greek Revival and Victorian buildings remain to remind the visitor of how the campus looked when he walked those paths six decades ago.

The City of Ithaca nestles at the southern end of Lake Cayuga, surrounded by hills to the east, the south and the west. The Cornell campus is on East Hill, reached by bus from downtown Ithaca. After passing through a welter of private homes, many of them converted into student rooming houses, the bus moves on into the Collegetown commercial center, with its bars, restaurants, laundromats and other stores serving the student community and then, after crossing the bridge over Cascadilla Gorge, enters the Cornell campus. During my last three years at Cornell, I crossed Cascadilla Bridge almost every day on foot, past the Kappa Alpha house and the Old Armory, both long since demolished. At the left, atop the long incline from the bridge, stands Anabel Taylor Hall, the home of Cornell United Religious Work. Ahead lies the core of the campus: Willard Straight Hall, the campus store in Barnes Hall, the 1870's-vintage Sage Chapel, the Sage Library with its impressive bell tower, and the Main Quadrangle, the "Quad."

My academic life at Cornell was centered not on the "Quad" but to my right as I entered the campus, in a collection of squat World War II-style Quonset huts, long ago demolished but which then housed the New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations. Opposite those Quonsets stood Sage Hall, my freshman dorm, behind it Statler Hall (the then newly-built Hotel School) and Barton Hall, the cavernous ROTC drill hall and basketball arena. Still further east lay Hoy Field, the baseball field, and Schoellkopf Crescent, the football stadium.

I arrived in Ithaca in early September 1951, dragging my footlocker off the train at the old Lehigh Valley ("The Route of the Black Diamond") Railroad station west of the city. The Cornell van that met the train took me through the downtown area and on up the hill east of the city to the Cornell campus. The campus was still

quiet; most of the students had not yet arrived. After one night on campus, we freshmen, confused, disoriented and entirely unprepared for what lay ahead, were immediately bused away to Sayre, Pennsylvania for freshman orientation camp.

The purpose of freshman camp was to build school spirit and camaraderie, to learn the Cornell traditions, the cheers and the songs. When you speak of Cornell to persons who are not students or alumni, it rings only one bell in their mind: the Alma Mater, "Far Above Cayuga's Waters." They invariably mispronounce Cayuga as Kah-yuga instead of Kay-yuga. At Freshman Camp, we were taught how to pronounce it correctly. There were many other songs to be learned and memorized: football songs, racing (crew) songs, drinking songs and the always-moving Evensong. The fine old college tradition of a *cappella* singing of college songs has lapsed into disuse. Most students today would be hard put to sing even one of their college songs. But the Cornell songbook was thick with songs added to the students' repertory over the years. We learned all of them in those three days at Freshman Camp.

We were also introduced there to the freshman beanie, a red cap with a little brim and a button on top. In a humiliating tradition, freshmen in years past had been required to wear it from the time of their arrival on campus to the first prelims (mid-term exams) sometime in early November. We, too, wore the beanie when we first arrived at Cornell but, within our first month on campus, we tossed it aside. No one taxed us for going bareheaded.

Another ignominious tradition no longer followed when we arrived on campus in September 1951 required freshmen to yield the right of way to upperclassmen in walking the campus paths. When an upperclassman approached, the freshman, identified by his beanie cap, was expected to step out of his way. That tradition had ended a few years before my arrival, when World War II veterans starting out as freshmen at Cornell refused to defer to upperclassmen younger and callower than they.

At Frosh Camp, we were also told of the statues of Ezra Cornell and Andrew Dickson White, founder and first president of Cornell, facing each other across the Quadrangle from their seats in front of Goldwin Smith Hall<sup>198</sup> and White Hall. It was said that, whenever a virgin coed passed between them, the two men arose from their seats, walked across the Quad, met each other halfway and shook hands. The tongue-in-cheek tradition had it that decades had passed

since Cornell and White had had cause to climb down from their perches to make that walk.

We left Frosh Camp and returned to Cornell in time for the start of freshman orientation. Cornell University in 1951 was no more a microcosm of America than my high school had been, its student body far less diverse than what I had experienced in the summer just-passed at the Encampment. Among the 9,000 students then enrolled at Cornell, men outnumbered women by four-to-one. We were almost entirely white; of the few African-American on campus, most had been recruited on athletic scholarships. There were but a handful of Asians. Nor were we diverse geographically. Because of the tuition-free education offered by the state schools at Cornell to New York residents, the largest number of students came from that state, and of those the bulk of them came from New York City and Long Island. Finally, religious diversity was what I had sought in selecting Cornell over Brandeis, but I did not find at Cornell the mix of religions that I had expected. Probably one out of four Cornell students was Jewish, and in my school, the ILR School, the percentage was even higher.

Freshman orientation passed for me, as for thousands of entering freshmen before and since, in a whirlwind of guided tours and registration and of buying books and materials, college pennants and other paraphernalia. A required stop for men was Barton Hall, headquarters for the Cornell ROTC and the physical education department. Because Cornell was in part a land grant school, established in 1868 under the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862, two years of ROTC were mandatory for all male students. Signing up for ROTC, we were issued the heavy wool olive drab uniforms that we were expected to wear for our twice-weekly ROTC drills, even in the warm spring weather.

A second stop was the pool in the basement of the Old Armory to take the swimming proficiency test: two lengths of the pool, out and back. I knew I would fail that test. At my many summer camps, I had spent hours in the swimming pool, struggling to learn how to swim; at 17, I still had not mastered that skill. The best I could do was dog-paddle feebly perhaps one-third of the distance toward the far end. Unable to satisfy that physical education requirement, a “must” for graduation, I was consigned to swimming classes until I could swim that minimum distance. Along with the other male non-swimmers, all of us buck-nekkid, I was to spend many hours in that

steamy pool in the basement of the Old Armory. Only when I was halfway through my sophomore year did I pass the swim test, with the benefit of some leniency on the instructor's part.

The final stop during Freshman Orientation was the Student Activities Fair, where the various campus organizations conducted sign-ups. I learned that the more prestigious activities, such as the Cornell *Daily Sun*; the campus radio station, WVBR; and the humor magazine, the Cornell *Widow*, conducted try-outs for spots on the staff. Shying away from competitions because of the fear that I would be among those rejected and because of the heavy commitment of time that I thought would be required, I signed up for Students for Democratic Action (SDA), the student arm of Americans for Democratic Action. I still had that enthusiasm for political action that I had gained from the Encampment, and SDA had been the organization most talked-about by those whom I admired that summer. My zeal was short-lived; I attended one meeting, seeing again, as I had some years earlier at Young Judea, that there was no "action" in Students for Democratic Action. I left in mid-meeting and did not return.

I also made an attempt to become active in the local Hillel Foundation, to shore up my religious belief and resolve some of the spiritual confusion I was feeling at that time. Sad to say, Hillel did nothing for me in that respect, nor, at that time, for many other Jewish students across the nation. The Hillel rabbi at Cornell, Morris Goldberg, struck me as a *nebbish*, frail and stoop-shouldered, bald but for tufts of hair over each ear, with rimless glasses and a little pencil line mustache over his upper lip. He spoke slowly in a soft, almost effeminate, voice. Impressed with the gruff bonhomie of Iris's pastor in Charles City, Virginia, I continually asked myself why the Hillel rabbi could not be more like him. It seemed to me that Jewish men of that type, hearty extroverts, were not attracted to the rabbinate, or to posts as University chaplains. I had no respect for Rabbi Goldberg. Nor was I made to feel welcome by the Hillel student leaders, the *machers* (doers) of the future. I stayed clear of Jewish organizational life on the campus, as I had elsewhere.

The convocation for incoming freshmen was held at Bailey Hall, the large semi-circular concert hall on campus. There we were greeted by the President, Deane Waldo Malott, himself newly-arrived from his former position as president of the University of

Kansas. He drove home the point at that time that he was as much a newcomer to Cornell as we were.

There was also a tour for incoming freshmen of the enormous Student Union, Willard Straight Hall, familiarly known as “the Straight.” With its granite and fieldstone exterior, its deeply-set windows with leaded glass panes and its slate roof, the Straight was designed, as were other American academic buildings of the 1920’s, to resemble its progenitors at Oxford and Cambridge. The building was nestled into the Libe Slope, with three floors at and above street level, on the crest of the Slope, and two levels below. The tour started at the uppermost level, where the guide pointed out the rooms maintained for campus guests. I was to know those rooms more intimately later that year, sharing a romantic weekend with Iris in one of them. One level below was the pool-and-billiards room and the barbershop. Women students, unless they were content with a “haircut,” had to go to beauty parlors off-campus. Below that was the main level, the multi-purpose room for lectures and dances, the music room and the lounge and library.

In the lobby, our guide pointed out to us the stone escutcheon over the main entrance doors, into which were carved the words of Terence, the Roman playwright, “*Nil humani alienum a me puto*” (“I consider nothing related to mankind foreign to me”). Many times, passing through those doors in later years at Cornell, I would look up at those words and reflect on their majesty, the passion for learning and scholarship that they conveyed. Ezra Cornell, in establishing the University some 83 years before my arrival there, had said much the same thing: “I would found an institution where any student can find instruction in any study.” It was to be, as its name implies, a *Universe-ity*.

Continuing the tour, we went to the next-lower level, to the cafeteria and the Ivy Room, where, over coffee and donuts, students spent their dead hours, the periods in-between classes. On still lower floors were the offices of the various campus organizations: the newspaper, the radio station and others, and a movie and performing arts theatre. There, in the bowels of the Straight and carried away by the excitement and by my own high spirits, I decided that I too could be a “guide.” I convinced other freshmen in my tour group that I was an upperclassman and proceeded to take them around the building, into its many nooks and crannies. These were of course as unfamiliar to me as they were

to those whom I was leading. After we had explored the whole building, I led the group back to the Ivy Room and there announced that the tour had come to an end. Irene Adler, an entering freshman as I was, seemed more responsive to my spiel than the others in the group. As they dispersed, I turned to her and invited her on a date, and she laughingly accepted. No lasting relationship was formed from that one date, but the episode remains a pleasant memory.<sup>199</sup>

In my freshman year I lived in Sage Hall, a stone's throw from the Quonset huts that housed the ILR School, just across Campus Drive. Designed eighty years earlier by a faculty member of the Cornell School of Architecture, Sage Hall was built after Cornell became a co-educational school, to house the first women students to reside on the campus. When the cornerstone was laid on May 15, 1873, the wealthy donor, Henry Sage, remarked:

*When opportunity and aid for culture are hers, then may we expect to see woman enlarged, ennobled in every attribute, and our whole race, through her, receive impulsion to a higher level in all things great and good.*

His wife, Susan Linn Sage, equally eloquent, added this quatrain:

*I lay this cornerstone in faith  
that structure fair and good  
Shall from it rise, and thenceforth come,  
true Christian womanhood.*

When I arrived at Cornell 78 years later, there was no more womanhood at Sage College, Christian or otherwise. With the construction of the newer dorms for women north of Triphammer Gorge, Sage Hall was converted into a men-only dorm.

I had been notified by mail that my roommate at Sage was to be another ILR freshman, Jay Schwartz of Racine, Wisconsin. When I met him, I realized immediately that we had been thrown together as roommates only because we were both ILR students and Jewish. It should have infuriated me that, in pairing members of the freshman class as roommates, some college administrator had fastened on our Jewishness as the one trait that would ensure tranquility in our room over the entire freshman year, that Jay and I would be more comfortable if we were with "our own kind." Instead, my reaction was one of wonderment that such narrow-minded, if well-intentioned, thinking still prevailed in that

enlightened time (1951!). The truth was that Jay and I had nothing in common except our Jewish heritage and our studies in industrial and labor relations. Of stocky build, thick curly black hair falling down over his forehead, a shapeless boxer's nose and shifty brown eyes, he spoke, gangster-style, from the corners of his mouth. His face seemed permanently set in a surly sour look. My enduring memory of Jay is that, inspired by our studies of evolution and the origin of species in our Introductory Anthropology course, he took to brachiating on the steam and water pipes suspended from the ceiling of our room. Chimpanzee-like, Jay would swing from one end of the room to the other, grunting all the while as simians supposedly do. Recognizing our lack of common interests and our differences in temperament, we survived our year as roommates by steering clear of each other, I using the Library to study and using the room, so far as possible, only for sleeping.

The New York State legislature had founded the School of Industrial and Labor Relations in 1945 as a constituent school within Cornell University to train young people to take roles in labor and industrial relations, either on behalf of unions or management, or in the public sector. Those who organized the school and worked to secure passage of the enabling legislation had the abiding vision that, through the training of a new generation of labor relations professionals, the brutal labor strife of the 1930's might be avoided and harmony would reign between labor and capital. Moreover, the whole personnel field (it wasn't called "human resources" then) was to be enlightened. Temple Burling, one of the school's professors, wrote a pamphlet intended for distribution to New York employers that put the matter succinctly in its title: "You Can't Hire a Hand." The reference was to the "Hands Wanted" signs formerly posted at factory gates when labor was needed. Burling's point was that an employee was more than a "hand," more than an extension of the machine he or she tended. Employees were to be treated as human beings, not as appendages to machines.

As one of the state-supported units at Cornell, the ILR School was tuition-free to New York residents; our only cost was the student activity fee, and, of course, room and board. The requirements for graduation at that time did not include any courses in mathematics, foreign languages or the physical or natural sciences. That had been one of the school's attractions for me; I

was inclined to avoid the courses in which had I had earned lower grades at Walden and which might now require long hours of lab work. The required courses were a mix, some taught within the ILR School and others in the College of Arts and Sciences. Those taught by members of the ILR faculty were a patchwork quilt of specialized courses, such as Training, Collective Bargaining and Labor Union History. In one of the largest lecture halls on campus, Professor Milton Konvitz, a "star" on the ILR faculty, taught a required course in "American Ideals," drawing students from every school at Cornell, and introduced us as freshmen to the writings of Locke, Montesquieu, Hume, Thomas Paine and de Tocqueville.

I enjoyed only one of the required vocationally-oriented courses given at the ILR School. The catalogue called it "Industrial Organizations and Institutions"; we called it "Bus Riding 101." Once a week, we boarded buses to visit nearby factories and plants. We took the coal miners' elevator down into the tunnels of an anthracite mine near Scranton and watched skilled women handpainting dinner plates at the Syracuse China Co. factory. We toured the glass-blowing factory in Corning, the Endicott-Johnson shoe factory in Johnson City and the IBM plant outside of Binghamton. These nearby companies had in common a corporate paternalism, the idea that the bargain between the corporation and its employees went beyond a fair day's work for a fair day's pay and was to include housing and medical care, recreation and leisure time activities for the employees and their families. Unions and their supporters saw this seeming benevolence as a smokescreen to keep the unions out, and perhaps it was. Most of these companies had successfully avoided unionization precisely because of this tradition.

There was more to Bus Riding 101 than what we saw and learned. Remembering my loneliness on the buses that took us on Walden class trips and determined to avoid it now, I made sure to sit next to one of the few girls in the class, so that we could do some smooching in the darkness of the bus on the way back to the campus. Two years later, that young lady temporarily dropped out of school. When she returned, she was married and the mother of a baby boy, making her the first of our class to become a parent.

Once the required courses were completed, during our second year, we had complete freedom to take courses anywhere in the University. I quickly tired of the narrowly-focused courses taught at the ILR School and found my true passion in the literature courses

taught in the College of Arts and Sciences, probably accumulating enough credits for a major, or at least a minor, in that area.

Of my forty professors at Cornell, I was fortunate to have four or five who made a lasting impression on me as excellent teachers or as men of strong character. I say “men” purposely because, in my four years at Cornell, I had only one female professor—the woman who taught Speech 101. What impressed me about this woman was not her skill as a teacher but her shapely legs. She would lecture or listen to our presentations while perched atop the desk, her elegant legs dangling sensually against the privacy panel. Nylon rustled against nylon as she first crossed the left leg over the right, then the right over the left. Sitting directly in front of her, I could hardly keep my mind on what she was saying; all I could do was stare fixedly at those legs.

Professor Clinton L. Rossiter taught Government 101 in my freshman year. Although this was a survey course required for all ILR freshmen, it was nevertheless unforgettable. Rossiter was short of stature but a big man in all the ways that truly counted. His dark eyes, slightly crossed, drilled into you through black-framed glasses. He favored the conventional Ivy League dress of the day: gray flannel slacks, a black-and-white herringbone tweed jacket, knitted black tie, squared-off at the bottom. In the lecture hall, he moved back and forth energetically in front of the blackboard, impassioned about his subject matter and conveying that passion in his rapid-fire delivery and the intensity he put into his lectures. Rossiter was a conservative in the best sense. The Founding Fathers formed his pantheon; he believed passionately in the enduring institutions that they established in Philadelphia in 1787. His 1953 text, *Seedtime of the Republic*,<sup>200</sup> dealing with that period, became a classic, one of the most widely-read books on that subject and still in print today.

By the late 1960’s, I had been gone from Cornell for several years. But I can well imagine how the turbulence of that period affected Professor Rossiter, seeming to challenge and cast doubt on everything that he held dear. First there was the assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1963, then, a year later, the Free Speech Movement at the University of California at Berkeley, in 1968 the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King and the violence that followed, and all the while the acrimonious nationwide debate between the supporters and the opponents of the Vietnam war.

The most devastating shock to the carefully-constructed world that Clinton Rossiter had created, a world where reason, logic and tradition held sway, was the occupation of Willard Straight Hall on April 19, 1969 by a group of African-American students. Their first act after the takeover was to chase out of the building the parents who were at Cornell for Parents' Weekend and were overnighing at the Straight. To those who love the school, the greatest mortification that Cornell has endured in its long history was the nationally-distributed photograph of one of the leaders of that takeover on the terrace of the Straight, a bandolier of large-caliber bullets across his chest, standing defiantly with legs apart, arms outstretched, rifle in hand.<sup>201</sup> It is easy to imagine the impact that this event and that photograph had on Professor Rossiter, who had spent most of his teaching career at Cornell, and whose very being was entwined with what he had built there.

The final blow came on May 4, 1970, when National Guardsmen fired on unarmed students at Kent State University in Ohio, killing four and wounding nine. Despairing of the state of the nation and of his beloved university, Professor Rossiter on July 17, 1970 sat down on a basement step at his home and fired a bullet into his head.

At the memorial service that followed, Alfred Kahn, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, said:

[Professor Rossiter] *devoted his life to probing the best traditions of his country. He believed profoundly in those traditions . . . and it was deeply painful to him when he thought his country was unfaithful to them.*

Clinton Rossiter was as much a casualty of the violent social ruptures of the 1960's as those who died at Kent State, at Selma, Alabama, and at Philadelphia, Mississippi.

From another member of the Arts and Sciences faculty, Douglas Dowd, I took a course in European Economic History in my junior year. His course was memorable not only for its dense thought-provoking content and because he was an excellent teacher but because of his caveat to his students in his opening lecture. "You should know," he said, "that I teach this course from the standpoint of Marxist economic determinism." I thought at the time that this statement was admirable for its intellectual honesty. In those years of witch-hunts for Communists in academia it took great courage to declare that one looked to Karl Marx for guidance

and inspiration. Not all of us had such courage. A year earlier, Gus Hall, then general secretary of the Communist Party USA, had given a lecture in the auditorium of Willard Straight Hall. I had planned to attend, but in the end I decided not to go. I was convinced that FBI agents were standing in the doorway, taking notes on those who were in the audience, and felt I would be harming my “brilliant career” by being there.

To anyone who came of age in the 1950's, the professor most often associated in the public mind with Cornell was Vladimir Nabokov. Not that Nabokov's destiny was in his own mind linked with Cornell's. Far from it: the university was but a convenient haven for him, his second teaching position in the United States after Wellesley College. It was during his years at Cornell that he wrote *Lolita*, the book that was to catapult him to fame and fortune. Some critics have called it one of the finest novels of the twentieth century; to other, it was nothing but pornography. *Lolita* was first published in 1955, the year of my graduation. The royalties from that book enabled Nabokov to resign from his teaching position and establish himself and his wife, Vera, in a comfortable hotel in Montreux, Switzerland, on the shores of Lake Geneva. There he continued his writing and chased after his beloved butterflies while playing the literary lion.

At Cornell, Nabokov taught a Modern European Literature course, the students jamming the largest lecture hall in Goldwin Smith Hall to hear him. Because I had not known of his course in time to sign up for the fall semester, I missed his lectures on Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, and Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*, but learned of him in time to sign up for the spring semester and take up *Anna Karenina*, Joyce's *Ulysses* and Kafka's *Metamorphosis*. Nabokov's lecture notes have been published in book form,<sup>202</sup> and, although that book may be out of print, it is probably still available in a well-stocked public library.

Just as Douglas Dowd made plain his Marxist orientation in teaching economic history, so Nabokov never shrank from proclaiming his own passions, his loves and hatreds, in literature. Leo Tolstoy was the Zeus in his pantheon. The scion of a Russian émigré of noble birth, Nabokov admired Tolstoy because he represented for Nabokov everything that was lofty in the Russian soul. He appreciated Tolstoy, too, as a craftsman who could delineate character and motivation subtly, so subtly that you

understood the character without being beaten over the head with his anguished self-analysis. Nabokov detested Freud as the father of psychoanalysis, referring to him as "the Viennese quack," and despised Feodor Dostoevsky precisely because he engaged in the same kind of psychologizing.

*In mid-March [1955] Nabokov was lecturing in his survey of Russian literature when a student rose to his feet and requested that he be allowed to talk about Dostoevsky for a class period if Nabokov would not. Afterwards, Nabokov stormed to the English Department offices, quite apoplectic with rage, and demanded that the student be expelled. He was not. Instead, the student began to boycott most of Nabokov's classes in protest against his treatment of committed writers. Often reluctant to credit the intelligence of those who disagreed with him, Nabokov for the remainder of the class noted in his diary whether the 'idiot' was present or not in class: only six times out of twenty. The young man received an F on the exam.*<sup>203</sup>

Clearly, Nabokov had no patience for dissent on literary matters. There was his position and the wrong position. To assure yourself of a B grade or better in the course, you passed back to him in the final examination the strong opinions that he had vented in class over the semester. Some said jokingly that Nabokov threw the bluebooks down the stairs and, wherever they landed, marked accordingly, but I gave him and his wife Vera (who actually read and graded the papers) credit for more diligence than that. Others said that, no matter how you performed on the later tests, the grade on the first prelim was the grade you were stuck with. These suspicions were confirmed years later by his biographer:

*Nabokov would explain that he graded his students' first papers of the year very carefully and then collected but never bothered to read any of their later work; the first mark simply became the grade for the course. He told Victor Lange, a colleague in the German Department: "Nobody ever improves; what you are, you remain."*<sup>204</sup>

It must have been true. In both of the courses I took with him, Nabokov gave me a B in the first prelim and a B for the course.

I don't mean to convey that Nabokov was a humorless pedant, far from it. He would read aloud whole paragraphs from Tolstoy, or Joyce, or Kafka, his face beaming with delight, sometimes scarcely able to speak for the pleasure a particular passage gave him. "Listen to this," he would urge us, and, stabbing at the page with his

forefinger, he would go on to read a particularly powerful description or metaphor, then pause for a moment in reverie, as if still savoring the language. One such passage was Anna Karenina's stream-of-consciousness soliloquy, just before she throws herself in front of an oncoming train at the end of the book. "*Tiutkin, Coiffeur*," she says, repeating to herself the sign on a beauty salon as she passes by on her way to the train station. "*Tiutkin, Coiffeur*," Nabokov read aloud in his unaccented French, his eyes brimming with admiration for Tolstoy's writing. Conversely, reading what he considered a particularly bad piece of writing by another author, Nabokov could collapse into a fit of giggles, while trying manfully to continue the reading. At that point, Vera, from her perch nearby, would send him a sharp look. Sensing the daggers in her eyes, Nabokov would struggle to compose himself.

When we reached Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, Nabokov devoted an entire lecture to speculate on the type of insect into which K was metamorphosed, bringing to bear his lifelong passion for butterflies and insects of all kinds. He concluded sagaciously and with evident self-satisfaction that the insect was a *mistfink*, a dung-beetle.

Nabokov had a particular interest in the structure of a novel and the author's use of time as a manifestation of structure. Lecturing on *Ulysses*, he pointed out that in the early morning hours of June 16th, the day that we now call Bloomsday, Leopold Bloom crumples a piece of paper and throws it from a bridge into Dublin's River Liffey. At the end of that day, and the end of the book, that same piece of wadded-up paper emerges from the Liffey into the Irish Sea. Nabokov cited that as an example of Joyce's genius.

He generously rewarded students who had similar insights. Preparing for the final exam, one student in Nabokov's course determined from a time-line chart she had prepared of *Anna Karenina* that Anna had been pregnant for seventeen months. She tried to reach Nabokov to get his reaction to this anomaly. The message came back that, if she would make this point in her exam paper, he would guarantee her an A for the course. She did, and he did.

Nabokov liked to project the image of a grouch, but his students were occasionally allowed glimpses into his fundamental humanity. In a closing lecture in one of his courses, he told them that

*The work with this group has been a particularly pleasant association between the fountain of my voice and the garden of ears, some open, others closed, many very receptive and a few merely ornamental, all of them human and divine.*<sup>205</sup>

He liked also to let on to his students that he had an appetite for the ribald, the bawdy. Goldwin Smith B, the lecture hall where Nabokov presided, or, more accurately, performed, was semi-circular in shape, the seats fanning outward and upward as in an amphitheatre. Nabokov lectured from a lectern at the center of the stage at the front of the hall. Vera, Mrs. N, slender and silver-haired with refined features, sat silently by herself on a chair off to the right of the lectern. We students entered from double doors on each side of the front wall in which the stage was placed. For several weeks, after every student was seated and Nabokov was poised to begin his lecture, the door to the right (his left) would open, and, as if in a ritual, a latecomer entered, always the same girl. A full head of jet-black hair, shoulder-length, framed her face. What drew Professor Nabokov's attention, and ours, to this woman was her body: she habitually wore a dazzlingly white turtleneck sweater stretched tightly across her prominent bust. The smirks and giggles would start as soon as she appeared in the doorway, then build into uncontrollable laughter as she slowly sauntered from the doorway to her seat in the front row, directly in front of the lectern. Nabokov would peer at her from over his glasses, trying to look reproachful but enjoying the performance every bit as much as the rest of us did. It reached the point where, as soon as we were seated, our gaze would be directed toward that door. As if reading his part in a script, the great N. himself would delay his lecture and lean forward across the lectern, turning expectantly to his left, a bemused smile on his face, waiting for that door to open.

Vernon Jensen, one of our ILR professors, taught a required course in labor economics. The class was held at 8:00 a.m. in a windowless, airless lecture room in Olin Hall, across from the ILR School. The long narrow room was lit like a theatre, with the lights dimmed overhead and bright lights focused on the professor. Jensen was a tall dour Scandinavian, utterly devoid of personality, with rimless glasses and a soporific voice. He must have had a wry sense of humor, though, because, early in the semester, he said to us: "I don't mind if you sleep through my lectures, but please do

not snore.” I had worked hard to create the appearance of being awake, one elbow propped on the extended arm of the seat, my head cupped in the palm of my hand, face down. Every so often I would jolt myself back into alertness, then cease the struggle and nod off again. When Professor Jensen made that remark, I felt I had been given leave to sleep through class, if I did it quietly.

One of the young up-and-coming professors at the ILR School was Mark Perlman, son of Selig Perlman, the well-known labor historian. Perlman taught a senior-level seminar on the leading thinkers in sociology, anthropology and the labor union movement, men such as Talcott Parsons, Thorstein Veblen and Daniel DeLeon. Veblen had been a junior faculty member at Cornell before moving on to make his reputation at Princeton. Perlman was to do the same not long afterwards, moving first to Johns Hopkins University and then to the University of Pittsburgh, where he taught for three decades. Another professor, Gregory Vlastos, who taught our introductory course in Philosophy, also moved on to Princeton a few years later. Just as, when younger, I had amused myself by creating a superb baseball team from among players who had once played for the New York Yankees, so, too, you could create an all-star academic team from among the professors who had cut their academic eyeteeth at Cornell and then moved on to a career at more prestigious universities.

Professor Perlman, recently married, wore a shiny wedding ring on his ring-finger. Sometimes, as he and his students exchanged ideas animatedly in the seminar room, I watched, mesmerized, as he slid that ring off his finger and stood it on end. Then, with a flick of his index finger, he would set the ring to spinning, staring fixedly at it until the ring came to rest on the table in front of him. Whether or not there was truth in it, the idea came to me as I watched him that this activity might reflect his attitude toward marriage in general and his own marriage in particular.

I recall my introductory course in Economics only because of an incident that echoed my castigation five years earlier at the hands of Margaret Collins, my seventh-grade English teacher. One day, as the instructor, Melvin Goodstein, tried to explain yet another supply-and-demand graph that he had chalked on the blackboard, my eyes wandered to the student newspaper, the *Daily Sun*, lying in my lap. Noticing my lack of attention, Professor Goodstein ordered me out of my seat and dismissed me from the class, telling me that I

could return when I was ready to concentrate fully on his lectures. Had I learned nothing from that earlier experience, I wondered? Why was there in me this streak of insubordination? That would have been fit fodder for a psychoanalytic session. Fortunately, Professor Goodstein seemed not to have held this encounter against me, giving me a B for the course, but the pattern of authority-defiance troubled me even then. It was not the first instance of that inclination, nor would it be the last.

Even though the School of Industrial and Labor Relations was tuition-free, requiring only the payment of a \$50 per semester student activities fee, money problems dogged me throughout my four years at Cornell. After my first year at Sage Hall, I lived off-campus. Mother sent me \$50 a month toward my living costs, but that left me far short of the money I needed for books, food, rent and entertainment. To make ends meet, I started in my sophomore year to work as a janitor at the Statler School of Hotel Administration, at seventy-five cents per hour. In that job, I joined thousands of others, in real life and in fiction, who worked their way through college washing blackboards and swabbing floors.

Statler Hall is a long rectangular building, a hybrid with the on-campus hotel and dining rooms at one end and classrooms at the other. The "hotellies," as we called them, learned by doing, taking classes in hotel management, food chemistry and the like and then applying their knowledge behind the hotel desk and in its kitchens and dining rooms. As a janitor there, I was responsible for cleaning the hallways on the second and third floors and the adjacent classrooms. My workday began at 2:00 each afternoon, Monday through Friday. A few minutes before my shift began, I would go down to the basement locker room to change into my light gray workclothes, then proceed upstairs to do my assigned work. The high point of the afternoon's work was using the power floor polisher on the linoleum tiles in the corridors.. Eventually, I learned to control that machine with just my thumb and forefinger. Using only those two fingers, I maneuvered the unwieldy machine from side to side, moving backward in a Zen-like trance from one end of the corridor to the other.

When our shift ended at 5:00 p.m. and before the first dinner guests arrived, the employees, both students and non-students, were given supper in the hotel cafeteria. The food was good, decidedly better than what was available in the Straight or at a Collegetown

eatery, but the dining arrangements rankled me. The pecking order was defined by the distance of the table from the buffet line. The boys and girls who waited on tables sat together nearest the buffet line, the boys in their black pants and Kelly green cut-away waiters' jackets, the girls in pink waitress uniforms with white aprons. I sat at the table in the rear with the non-student employees, the janitors and charwomen and housekeepers. Unlike James Gatz, the central character in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, I did not despise my work, but I resented the lower status to which my work and my uniform consigned me, resented having to eat in the back with the other housekeeping staff instead of at the front table with other students.

Two other men, non-students and many years older than I, worked with me as janitors. One of them, Woodrow Wilson Talbert (naturally we called him "Woody") was Lincolnesque in height and beanpole build and in his gangly movements. Woody was unquestionably "straight" and definitely "country." The other man, Gus, was middle-aged, pudgy and balding. He was also what we would call today a closet gay. I didn't realize that until he started calling me his "Spanish prince," and making more and more suggestive overtures. I ignored him. Then one day he broke down and, with teary eyes, blubbered that he had a crush on me. Since he was not the first man to make a pass at me, I cannot say that I was naïve in matters of this kind. But those earlier episodes had been casual encounters; this man worked alongside me. I found myself completely at a loss for words. I started to respond, stopped, then tried again, and stopped again, finally stammering out that I wasn't that kind of guy and had no interest in this kind of relationship. After that, I took care not to change clothes in the locker room while he was there, and he steered clear of me.

Also seated at our cafeteria table was Florrie, a woman then in her 40's who worked as a seamstress in the housekeeping department. Her broad cockney accent betrayed her East London origins. It was not Gus, the gay janitor, but Florrie, this rather plain-looking English woman, who became the focus of my sexual fantasies. Florrie must have been aware of my suppressed desires, though I never got up the courage to "come on" to her.

The sophomore year was the low point in my college life, as it is for many students at American colleges. I was lonely after the break-up with Iris and bored with my courses in the ILR School.

Should I stay at Cornell or transfer? Should I transfer out of Industrial Relations into another school at Cornell, putting aside the fact that the only other state units at Cornell were Agriculture and Home Economics and that I had neither interest nor aptitude in either? Should I perhaps drop out of college and work for a year or so, then re-enroll? I sent for applications from American University in Washington and Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida and tried to visualize what it would be like to enroll at those institutions. While "thinking things through," I saw that I needed help, and went to Professor James M. Campbell, the head of the ILR School's Guidance Counseling Center. He referred me to the University Guidance Center in Day Hall, the administration building.

The Guidance Center's questionnaire opened by asking: "Why are you consulting the Guidance Center?" I answered that I was considering a change in my course of study "because I don't like the idea of spending a lifetime at an office desk." That showed my ignorance of how most college-educated people earn their living. Then I continued:

*I feel the need to set a concrete goal for myself and to be educated to best achieve that goal. The ILR curriculum is a dead end for me, and I would like, on the basis of tests and counseling, to see where my aptitudes and interests meet, and to see whether a transfer to another college, or to another school within Cornell, is warranted.*

I was given a series of tests, measuring not only interests and aptitudes but psychosocial adjustment as well. The final assessment coincided very neatly with my own self-assessment:

*Test scores show the client to have excellent general mental alertness. Scores of academic aptitude at the Cornell level are average for math-science factors and excellent for verbal facility. Reading skills are also excellent at the college level. Perception of spatial relations is superior. Judgment of artistic design is excellent for a student without art training. Artistic execution shows moderate ability.*

The recommendation: "Consider law, teaching, social sciences, advertising, and journalism." I felt that this recommendation was right on the mark with the careers I was then envisioning, however vaguely, for myself. On the issue of most immediate importance, whether I should remain at the ILR School, the recommendation was: "Continue in present program temporarily." I followed that

recommendation instead of the alternatives that I had been considering, and never regretted it. Things did get better, as they usually do for most students in the same quandary.

On the other hand, my responses on the Bell Adjustment Inventory Test led the counseling office to describe me as "*below average [in the test score] and more sensitive in home, social and emotional relationships than is normal.*"

That sentence aptly summarized my shyness, lack of poise, and unease in social situations. Where did that shyness come from? Scientists of late have found that the trait can be genetic, passed from generation to generation. Perhaps it was so in my case. Was it the absence of strong gregarious men in my immediate circle? Perhaps it was that as well. Perhaps the absence of a father throughout those growing-up years was a factor. Dr. Erickson has written:

*Perhaps the single most significant contribution that fathers make to their sons is to anoint them "man enough." [W]ithout the experience of learning to be a man and a father by hanging around with one of them, boys who want to become men have to guess at what men are like.<sup>206</sup> Men who are robbed of that experience often never feel comfortable with what it means to be a man.<sup>207</sup>*

On the other hand, Ben seemed always to be more gregarious than I, moving easily among a circle of male friends. He seemed not to have been affected by that father-loss as I was and, if there is indeed a "shyness gene," he seemed not to have inherited it. In any event, I was clearly "more sensitive . . . than is normal" in flinging myself head-first into a passionate relationship with Iris, then feeling all the more keenly the pain of the break-up when her affections drifted elsewhere, even though that had been my doing. That's what young people go through—surviving those growing pains are, I suppose, part of what it means to be an emotionally healthy adult, one who does not allow himself to be crippled by the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

"Bright college years," the song goes. Not so for me. Academically yes, but socially the first three years at Cornell were for me a long walk down "Lonely Street." In the first year and a half, I was emotionally committed to Iris, but writing and receiving long ardent love letters were no substitute for her presence. After

that relationship ended, I found the social scene at Cornell daunting.

Cornell was, and is, a fraternity school. Evidently, I had none of the characteristics that make a male freshman desirable to a fraternity; I was just another barely-able-to-make-ends-meet Jewish kid from upper Manhattan, with no redeeming accomplishments on the athletic field or elsewhere that would make me stand out in a crowd. So I was on no fraternity's rush list, nor did I pursue membership in a fraternity. As a sophomore, I started taking meals at Watermargin, an eating club for progressive non-fraternity types, but dropped out of that house before the year was over.. My lack of spending money also put a decided crimp in my social life, even as an "independent."

During my first three years at Cornell, I had only a few male friends and these were young men with very different life experiences from mine. They were classmates of mine at the ILR School, sons of working-class Catholic families, perhaps the first in their family to attend college, coming from German or Polish immigrant communities in upstate New York. With them I could enjoy male-type activities, such as double-dating and attending football games, without the need for pretense.

After my relationship with Iris ended, I dated several women at Cornell without being attracted to any of them, or they to me. Dating at Cornell, as at other Eastern colleges, was done according to a well-defined set of rules. The women had strict hours: they had to sign back in at the dorm by 10:30 on weekday nights, 12:30 on Friday nights, 1:30 on Saturday nights. A woman who missed curfew could be "grounded" for the following weekend or worse, depending on the case. As the witching hour approached, couples rushed to get inside the dorm on time. The lucky ones could do their last-minute smooching in their cars. Others found a secluded place outside the dorm entrance for that last embrace before the chimes struck the hour.

Once the curfew hour had passed, the male students left the women's dorms north of Triphammer Bridge, stopped at Louie's lunch wagon for a late-night snack, then streamed back across the bridge. With the women safely inside the dorms, it was once again an all-male world. There was, it seemed to me, a palpable relief at the casting off of the shackles of propriety; the rules had been suspended for the remainder of the night. Now the men

congregated at the Royal Palm pizzeria and other Collegetown hangouts, eating and drinking until closing time and then staggering home.

My social life took a turn for the better in my senior year. A classmate, Howard Fink, and I signed a lease for a walk-in basement apartment in a white-shingled house similar to many in Collegetown that had once been private homes and were later converted to apartments or rooms. Howard and I cooked, ate and partied together, and became lifelong friends. At his urging, I included my dirty laundry with his in the aluminum box that he sent home every week to have his mother wash and iron. Howard went on to Yale Law School, became an expert in civil procedure and then taught at Ohio State University Law School for almost forty years.

In my senior year, I also joined YASNY (You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet), a student organization whose task it was to decorate the vast interior of Barton Hall for the fall and spring proms. The object for each dance was to outdo all previous efforts, and that we did, creating a fairyland of flashing lights, cascading waterfalls and turreted castles. On prom night, we had our own table, and accepted the kudos of the other prom-goers.

In those years, the Big Bands regularly played the college circuit, moving from one prom to another. Top-flight bands came to Cornell while I was there: Claude Thornhill, Buddy Morrow, Ralph Flanagan and Ray Anthony. Cornell was but one stop among the many "one-night stands" played by those bands. The music was so good that many couples didn't even dance, just stood in front of the bandstand, rapt in the music. But it was the end of an era, the twilight of the Big Band sound. Even as I was making my exit from Cornell, swing was exiting the music scene, to be crowded out by rock-and-roll.

In my final semester at Cornell, I read an announcement posted on a bulletin board for the Knoblaugh Prize Essay Contest: \$150.00 to an undergraduate for the best essay on the problems and struggles of equal rights for women. I said to myself, "I can do that," and decided to write a paper on "The Origin and Early Years of Co-Education at Cornell University." It did not enter my mind that I was playing in someone else's sandbox, so to speak. For the next two months, I spent hours in the stacks at the Sage Library, researching the subject and writing the paper. Morris Bishop, then emeritus Professor of English at Cornell, had written the official

history of the University but had barely touched on this important question. I found diaries kept by the first women who entered the University, correspondence between Ezra Cornell and Andrew Dickson White favoring their admission, and contemporary newspaper accounts of the controversy. The strongest opposition to co-education came from male students who claimed that the presence of women would distract them from the serious pursuit of their studies and introduce frivolity on the campus.

At midnight of the day before the paper was due, I was still typing it. When I had finished it, I signed it with an assumed name, "Donald Smith," as the announcement had required. This was a serious strategic error, as it turned out. My chances of winning the contest would have been considerably improved had my assumed name been Dorothy, or Denise, or Debbie.

The next day, I rushed up to the Administration Building, Day Hall, and handed in the essay moments before the deadline. Objectively speaking, all this effort was for naught. I was told that my paper did not win the prize because the manuscript contained too many typographical errors. That was true; in my haste to submit the paper before the deadline, I had not had the time to edit it. What made the turndown even more galling was that only two papers had been submitted, mine and the winner's. I suspect that the winner was a woman, but I was ignorant then of the imperatives of political correctness. It wouldn't do to have a public ceremony at which the prize-winner certificate and the first-prize check were handed to a man! No matter: I had the satisfaction of knowing that the research I had done was careful and thorough and that the paper itself was the best I had ever written.

Commencement Day, June 13, 1955, was a sunny day, a piercingly blue sky arching overhead, as Howard and I emerged from our apartment on College Avenue. I was pleased with myself. I had not only survived these four years but had done rather well academically, finishing in the top 20% of the class. In cap and gown, Howard and I marched into Barton Hall and took our seats among the other graduates-to-be and a crowd of parents, relatives and friends. Mother and Ben had taken the train up to attend the graduation. Now they were among the crowd sitting in the Barton Hall bleachers.

In keeping with the University's longstanding tradition, no honorary degrees were conferred. Andrew Dickson White, first president of the University, had written in his autobiography:

*Everyone knows individuals in the community whose degrees, so far from adorning them, really render them ridiculous; and everyone knows colleges and universities made ridiculous by conferring such pretended honors.*

That was true when he spoke; it was still true in 1955 and remains so today. President Malott gave the commencement address. He pointed out that he had started as president in September 1951, just as we had started as freshmen that same month. He spoke about the lessons he had learned in the intervening four years and suggested that he had learned from Cornell every bit as much as we had. We sang the Alma Mater for the last time as students, and left Barton Hall as college graduates.

As Howard and I, our gowns now draped over our arms, started the long walk back to our apartment, he turned to me and said, "You know, Danny, we will never be as happy and free from care as we have been these past few years in college." I looked at him quizzically, thinking to myself that this was indeed a depressing prospect: that, no matter how good our college years had been, we would not attain in the rest of our lives that level of happiness. I think Howard had in mind that now we would have to go out into the world, earn our daily bread and take responsibility for our life decisions. I supposed that this much was true, but as for happiness, I rather hoped that I would have more of my share of it in the years to come than I had had in the past four years. Fortunately, that was to be the case.

Early the next morning, Mother, Ben and I took the Lehigh Valley Railroad train back from Ithaca to New York, reversing that first train ride that I had taken as an entering freshman almost four years earlier. Looking back on my experience at Walden and at Cornell, I felt a sense of satisfaction that I had been exposed to the best that American education could offer, and I had taken full advantage of it. My education, both formal and in the ways of the world, was, however, by no means complete. While I had no fixed plans for the future, I was certain that great days lay ahead. In this optimism I was not alone; other graduating seniors had the same rosy image of their future:

*I considered myself an intelligent person, trusted my instincts and judgment, and didn't spend a lot of time brooding about mistakes I'd made in the past. I believed that I was a good person and expected the future to be good to me.*<sup>208</sup>

In thinking then about what lay in store for me, I saw myself as the passive beneficiary of a future *deus ex machina*. Life, I was reasonably certain, would be good to me. I had in my favor a lively mind and a presentable appearance; on the debit side were shyness, a lack of *savoir faire* and difficulty in submitting to authority. I would have to learn to overcome these obstacles. It took me many years, however, to learn that no one would hand me the good life on a silver platter. I had not had the life's lessons, did not realize on my own, and had no father, uncle or Dutch uncle to drum it into me.

## ENTR'ACTE: COMING OF AGE

June 1955 marked the end of my undergraduate education and my entry into the world of work. It could be said also to mark not my attainment of maturity (that would be a longer process) but my coming of age, as it does for the thousands of young men and women who receive their college degrees in the spring of each year. What kind of a world was this young man, just turned 21, entering in June 1955?

I came of age in the buttoned-up, buttoned-down years between the Korean War and the Vietnam Conflict. In June 1953, the bloody Korean War ended in stalemate, a cease fire and then an armistice. The 38th Parallel was fixed as the line of demarcation between North and South, as it had been before the war began. The first two Americans whose names are inscribed on the Vietnam War Memorial on the Mall in Washington met their fate on July 8, 1959. So you could say that the year I graduated, 1955, was part of that stretch of four years in which the United States knew relative peace, to the extent that any year during the Cold War, with the threat of nuclear annihilation hanging over us, could be called a peaceful one. We were the “in-between” generation: too young for World War II, barely old enough to fight in the Korean War but, as students, deferred from having to serve during those hostilities, and, finally, too old for the Vietnam War.

Many commentators, and those who lived through that decade, recall it as a simpler time, an age of innocence for the politically innocent. The great fault lines in our society that now lie gaping in view—between men and women, between the different races and

cultures, between rich and poor—were obscured or papered-over then. The age of violent protest and civil disobedience had not yet begun. Our popular culture had not cheapened and coarsened as it has over the past four decades, and, with a few notable exceptions, there was not that vitriol in the public forum with which we are bombarded today, nor had we come yet to the time when every fringe group clamors to be heard. For white middle-class American men, the early 50's were a time of can-do optimism. A reassuring feel-good president, Dwight D. Eisenhower, personified the blandness of the time.

You could call it the “Before Era”:

- before Sputnik, when landing a man on the moon was still the stuff of science fiction fantasy in the pulp magazines
- before pantyhose, when women of all ages still wore girdles, corsets and garters
- before the fancy unisex salons and the electric razor, when men who wanted a really close shave went to the neighborhood barbershop to be artfully shaved by a barber wielding a well-honed straight-edge razor
- before acre-size supermarkets, when you might go to one store for groceries and another for produce, and then to the butcher for your meats and fish
- before The Pill was widely available and before *Roe v. Wade* legalized abortion across the nation
- before color TV and before most Americans had any TV at all
- before home air-conditioning, dishwashers and microwaves
- before the Packard, the Hudson, the DeSoto and the Studebaker fell victim to changing American tastes, and before Toyota, Honda, Nissan and other foreign cars invaded these shores
- before the Interstate Highway System and the advent of mass air transportation, when luxury travel meant a voyage in first class on H.M.S. Queen Elizabeth or a roomette on the Twentieth Century Limited
- before the pushbutton phone and five-digit ZIP codes, and certainly before the advent of the cellphone, an era when many Americans were served only by party phone lines and

you could listen in on your neighbor's phone conversations, or they on yours

- before Title IX put women's sports on an equal footing with men's, when women played half-court basketball, six to a side, and had hardly any female athletes as role models
- before LSD and marijuana became mainstream drugs, available even to seventh-graders
- before Ray Kroc fatefully stopped in at the MacDonald Brothers hamburger stand in San Bernardino, California and there was not yet a fast-food restaurant at every intersection; indeed, the term "fast-food" had not yet been coined
- when a motel was a clutch of primitive cabins set back in the tall pines and there were no Holiday Inns, Red Roofs, Motel 6's and their ilk; a vacation meant two weeks in a rented bungalow in the mountains or at the shore or a no-frills hotel on Lincoln Road in Miami Beach, and a pleasure trip to Europe was almost unheard of
- before Nik-O-Lock coin machines on restroom doors, with locks that could only be opened by dropping a nickel in the slot, or a dime or a quarter, and if you needed to "go" and didn't have the change, you crawled under the door or climbed over the top
- when you took the subway to Coney Island or Playland, or a bus ride to Palisades Amusement Park, not a week-long trip to Disney World or Busch Gardens
- before Hugh Hefner launched Playboy Magazine and celebrity women could pick up a quick \$100,000 by posing for its centerfold, when teen-age boys got their jollies instead from the photos in "The American Naturalist" magazine, showing well-proportioned young women and men cavorting in the nude on the beaches and in the meadows, their "good parts" skillfully airbrushed out.

It was the era of the Man in the Gray Flannel Suit, the Organization Man, the man who had made up his mind to put the horrors of World War II behind him and was now consumed with moving up the corporate ladder, with "making it." It was, specifically, the *man* in the gray flannel suit. The magazine ads sent out the clear message that a woman's place was in the kitchen. Her

greatest pleasure, according to the ads, was to use the new Electrolux vacuum cleaner to clean the house, the new Hotpoint to wash and dry the clothes, and the new Tappan gas range to get dinner ready for the overworked husband and the children. Women with vocational aspirations wanted to be nurses, teachers, librarians or social workers. To be sure, there were some women, not many, in the nation's law schools, medical schools and other institutions of advanced studies. When they came out with diplomas in hand, they had to confront and overcome long-standing prejudices against women as equals in the workplace.<sup>209</sup>

It was also the twilight of the Separate but Equal era in race relations. In 1954, the Supreme Court had decreed in *Brown v. Board of Education* that public schools across the nation were to be desegregated "with all deliberate speed." In the years immediately after that decision, it almost seemed as if "deliberate speed" might mean "not in our lifetimes." Blacks and whites led entirely separate lives. The only black person whom most whites knew well was the maid, who came once or twice a week from "her part of town" to work for the white folks, often traveling more than an hour each way and having to transfer buses two or three times.

We were also a sexually-repressed generation. The emblematic actress was Doris Day, of whom Oscar Levant famously quipped, "I knew her before she was a virgin." In Hollywood films, husbands and wives slept in double beds, separated by a night table. In an emergency, a man could stay overnight in a woman's apartment, but only on the living room sofa. When a woman awoke in the morning, there was always a full-length peignoir within arm's reach so that, on standing beside the bed, she was clothed in modesty. The co-stars, Cary Grant or Rock Hudson or another leading man, wore elegant silk pajamas, although the men in the audience, if they were returning war veterans, had worn their skivvies to bed during their military service and probably were still wearing them, or nothing at all. All this was decreed by the Hays Office, administering the Motion Picture Code, under the threat that the Legion of Decency would put the film on its "prohibited" list.

At the same time, young people were flocking to the art-film houses to see the pioneering films that the Italian and French *auteurs* were making in the immediate postwar years. A few, very few, Hollywood movies come to mind that also broke the mold: "The Wild Ones," with Marlon Brando (1953) and "Rebel Without a

Cause” with James Dean (1955). They conveyed the message to teenagers and young adults that there were other ways of living your life than in bland conformity to the dictates of the culture czars.

In literature, it was more of the same. In 1955, the year of my graduation from college, Herman Wouk wrote *Marjorie Morningstar*, a novel of a young Jewish woman coming of age in New York City and the Catskills. For 416 pages of that 565-page novel, Marjorie was relentlessly but fruitlessly wooed by the wolfish Noel Airman. Only on page 417 was she finally bedded down, leading some ways to characterize it as the most prolonged seduction in the history of American literature.

The U.S. Customs Office had a list of books that were labeled “obscene” and could not be imported into this country. Among them was James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. It took a federal court decision in 1955 to lift that ban. Many of the books on the embargo list had been published by Maurice Girodias’s Olympia Press in Paris, among them Frank Harris’s *Life and Loves* and Henry Miller’s *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn*. Some forty years earlier, the Rev. Anthony Comstock of the Blue-Stocking League had sought to prevent the showing of Paul Chabas’s “September Morn,” an inoffensive painting of a nude woman dipping her toes in the tidal pool before taking her bath. His crusade for removal of the painting naturally generated more interest in it than its owner could have ever hoped for before the Reverend Mr. Comstock’s campaign began. Just so, the ban on the Olympia Press books and others branded as “obscene” piqued the interest of young men and women in reading what had been banned, thereby greatly increasing the demand for them. Erskine Caldwell’s *God’s Little Acre* (1933), the object of another such lawsuit seeking to squelch its distribution, had similarly been passed from hand to hand so often that the book fell open immediately to its choicer passages.

Serious American writer struggled to express themselves within the literary restrictions of the time. In Norman Mailer’s *The Naked and the Dead*, published in 1948, the men in the foxholes, cursing, said “fug” and “fuggin’,” because his publishers would not allow Mailer to use the ineffable “F” word.

While novelists such as Mailer, Irwin Shaw and others struggled to describe their wartime experiences within established boundaries of good taste, straight-up pornography such as the “Tijuana Bibles,” having no literary or artistic pretensions, was passed back and forth

in the schoolyards and under the school desks. These were send-ups of the comic strips of the time, showing Blondie, Tess Trueheart and Daisy Mae and other comic-strip females as sexually insatiable and their male counterparts, Dagwood, Dick Tracy, L'il Abner, Snuffy Smith and others, as voracious sexual predators with wildly disproportionate anatomies.

In popular song, the same repression prevailed. The male crooners and gal-singers dominated the charts: Perry Como, Frankie Laine, Tony Martin, Nat (King) Cole, Teresa Brewer, Kay Starr and Patti Page. In those same years, at the roadhouses and juke joints frequented by poor blacks out in the piney woods and the hardscrabble hamlets of the Deep South, solo singers and groups were combining traditional country music on the lead guitar with the insistent back beat of the rhythm section. We didn't hear that beat until the mid-50's, when white songwriters and publishers on Tin Pan Alley picked it up and promoted it as "rock-and-roll . . . to satisfy your soul."

Men and women in that uptight era played an elaborate dance. If a guy thought he was going to "score," or hoped to, he might go to the neighborhood pharmacy to buy Trojans, three-for-a-dollar, one-size-fits-all, in the distinctive red-and-white-striped box. The pharmacist kept them in a drawer next to the cash register; you had to screw up your courage and ask for them. With enough hemmin' and hawin' on your part, the lady behind the counter would know what you were looking for and maybe pull them out of the drawer, without your even asking, and have a good chuckle at your expense.

In a bawdy song of eighteenth-century England, a mother unsuccessfully admonished her young daughter to "keep thy haunches close." Two centuries later, the message was the same: "There's no need to give them the cow when all they want is a little milk." For their part, men joked that virginity was just "a big issue over a little tissue." While the "good girls" were going to "save it" for when they got married, or at least engaged, guys envied their buddies who had the metaphorical notches on their belt. What did they have that we didn't, we asked ourselves, that made them so successful in that department?

In the world of politics, my generation, born into the Depression, may be the only one never to have laid claim to the Presidency. When William J. Clinton defeated George H. W. Bush for the presidency in 1992, the torch passed directly from the World

War II generation to the baby-boomer generation, those born immediately after World War II. Only two contemporaries of mine have run for the presidency: Democrats Michael Dukakis and Walter Mondale. Both were defeated.

But, even in the mid-50's, "the times they were a changin'," to use Bob Dylan's famous phrase. In San Francisco on October 27, 1955, Allan Ginsberg read his new poem, "Howl," at the Six Gallery on Fillmore Street, changing American poetry forever. Two years later, Jack Kerouac rocked the book-publishing world and changed American culture with the publication of his *On the Road*. With the introduction of rock 'n' roll into mainstream culture in 1954, there was a "whole lot of shakin' goin' on." Boys and girls of all races were now shuckin' and jivin' to the Crewcuts singing "Sh-Boom" and Bill Haley and his Comets playing "Shake, Rattle and Roll." Both records sold in the millions and set the stage three years later for the blockbuster hit, "Rock Around the Clock," also by Bill Haley and the Comets. It was clear even to those who were trying to stem the tide that "rock 'n' roll was here to stay."

For those of us who came of age in the 1950's, it was an uptight culture, just waiting to explode. The election of John F. Kennedy as President in 1960 gave us hope that change was on the way. On January 20, 1961, delighted that the big sleep of the past eight years was about to end, I stood shivering in the cold with tens of thousands of others on Pennsylvania Avenue to cheer the new president on his way to the White House. Three years later, it all fell apart with President Kennedy's assassination. Then came the Berkeley Free Speech Movement; the steady increase in body bags arriving from Viet Nam; the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. and, in its aftermath, rioting, arson and looting in the streets; and then the assassination of Robert Kennedy. Those traumatic events brought an abrupt end to innocence and propelled us forcefully into the new age.

## OUT OF COLLEGE, ON MY OWN

Fresh out of college and 21, I was less concerned with “coming of age” than with the change in my draft status resulting from college graduation: the revocation of my 2-S student deferment. My draft board notified me that I was now reclassified 1-A, the highest and most vulnerable draft classification, and eligible to be called up on a moment’s notice. I could have avoided the draft by enrolling for an advanced degree in law or in a doctoral program, but my life plans had not yet crystallized, and I was ready to “move on,” as we say today. Another alternative would have been to volunteer immediately for active duty. That would have been a more efficient use of the immediate post-college years, but it might have meant a posting to the front lines at the 38th Parallel in Korea. That was not a pleasant thought, so I did what most young men did: I “waited it out.”

In those days, one of the first questions that an employer asked a young man at a job interview, was “What is your draft classification?” The honest answer, “1-A,” ended your prospect of finding a well-paying job. Employers were reluctant to hire someone and spend time training him, only to have the young man receive a draft notice a few months later. By law, the returning serviceman also had re-employment rights after his discharge. It seemed good business not to hire someone in this category in the first place, and there was no penalty for not doing so.

Returning home from Ithaca in June 1955, I had college degree in hand but no job and no prospects in view. Mother’s friend Karen Gutmann stepped into the breach, setting me up with a summer job

as a salesman in the men's clothing department at the Saks Fifth Avenue resort shop in Southampton, New York. Not a bad job, though certainly not on my career path. There are worse ways of spending the first summer out of college than to pass the working hours at a genteel resort haberdashery and one's off-duty hours lying on the beach or exploring the byways of the Hamptons on a rented bike.

At summer's end, now back in New York, I was jobless again until October, when I signed on for the holiday shopping season as a "section manager" at Macy's on Herald Square, walking the floor in Housewares with a white boutonniere in my lapel. That too, was pleasant, because I was in the company of other young men and women fresh out of college, all section managers as I was. At the same time, I was giving English lessons three hours a week to a young Japanese woman whose husband was temporarily assigned to work at the New York offices of a Japanese seafood-exporting firm.

With the end of the holiday shopping season in January 1956, I was again unemployed, and my prospects for a decent permanent job remained slim. I was about to inform my draft board that I was ready to serve when Fortuna again intervened. Unexpectedly, I received a letter from the Bureau of National Affairs, Inc. in Washington: would I be interested in a position on its editorial staff? BNA had obtained my name from the placement office at the ILR School. The previous spring, as a graduating senior, I had filled out a questionnaire distributed to everyone in my class, asking whether they had obtained employment and, if not, the type of employment they were seeking. I had answered, "Research, such as, for example, with the National Industrial Conference Board or the Bureau of National Affairs." I had no idea at the time what BNA did, thought it engaged in research and issued monographs on labor and industrial relations. I might even have thought, since it called itself a "Bureau," that it was an agency of the federal government.

When BNA called the ILR placement office to set up interviews for openings, the staff there found in its files the completed placement questionnaire of a young man (me) who had singled out BNA by name as a desirable place to work. That was how the letter came "out of the blue" from BNA, asking if I were still interested in working for the company. A few days later, I took the train down to Washington.

I had been to Washington perhaps three times before. When I was twelve, I had visited John Wolff, a first cousin twice removed, and his wife, Eleanor, at their house on 34th Place, N.W., just east of Chevy Chase Circle. Coming as I did from the noisy, congested and dirty streets of New York, that comfortable house, set back from quiet residential streets behind azalea bushes and oak trees, made a deep and lasting impression on me. I was even more impressed at bedtime when Eleanor took me up to my room and showed me the bed that I was to sleep on. It was a real bed, a double bed at that, with a real innerspring mattress, not the narrow folding cot that I slept on at home. After my first night in the house, I awoke, stretched out lazily, and felt as if I were living in luxury.

Still earlier, I had visited Washington with Mother when she attended a convention of the Modern Language Association there. The convention was at the venerable Mayflower Hotel, but we stayed at the Martinique Hotel, a charming Old World hotel a block or so farther north at 16th and M Streets N.W. On that visit, I was struck by the wide avenues, lined with Beaux Arts mansions and townhouses. Life seemed so much more pleasant than in New York City. People didn't walk as fast, and they even smiled and stepped aside to allow you to enter the revolving doors first.

The street map itself bespoke an orderly world: the broad avenues bisecting diagonally the grid of north-south and east-west streets, the streets and avenues depicted in white, the blocks in tan, the traffic circles and the broad swath of Rock Creek Park in green, the Potomac and Anacostia rivers in light blue. I was intrigued by the street-naming system, alphabetical, first with letters only, then with names of two syllables, then three. The names, in trochaic and dactylic meter, tripped lightly off my tongue: Harvard, Irving, Porter, Upshur, Albemarle, Crittenden, Nicholson, Rittenhouse and so on.

With the favorable impression of the city gleaned from those earlier visits, I welcomed the opportunity to move to Washington for the job with BNA. I arrived in mid-January, 1956, wide-eyed, filled with high hopes and great expectations, as had thousands like me who had arrived in Washington, fresh out of college, ready to make a hazard of new fortunes.

The Nation's Capital was very different in 1956 from what it is today, but probably had not changed much from what it had been

during World War II. Federal government offices were still concentrated in the Federal Triangle downtown, the impressive buildings between Pennsylvania and Constitution Avenues being large enough to house the entire Departments of Commerce, Labor and Justice and the Internal Revenue Service. There was as yet no need to scatter federal employees among rented offices throughout the metropolitan area, as they are now. At the Federal Triangle, nothing has changed in the 50-plus years since my arrival in Washington except that the Reagan Building now stands at 13<sup>th</sup> Street and Pennsylvania Avenue where for many years there was only an open parking lot.

When I arrived in Washington in 1956, the Museum of History and Technology and the National Gallery's East Wing had not yet been built on Constitution Avenue, nor had the Hirshhorn Museum and the Sackler Museums on Independence Avenue. There were temporary buildings on the Mall where those museums now stand. Similarly, rows upon rows of temporary buildings stood on Constitution Avenue west of the Ellipse. These had been erected as Navy offices during the war and were still in use eleven years later. On the north side of Pennsylvania Avenue stood, as they had for decades and still do today, the ornate beaux arts edifices housing the Willard Hotel at 14th Street, and, on 12th Street, the offices of the *Evening Star* newspaper. Much of the rest of the avenue, down to 5th Street, was a mélange of two-and three-story redbrick commercial buildings, dating back to the 1870's, many of them home to seedy souvenir stores. These were the buildings that, five years later, the newly inaugurated President, John F. Kennedy, was to notice as he drove to the White House after taking his oath of office at the Capitol. Turning to an aide, he told him that those decrepit buildings had to go. It was not right, Kennedy said, that those rundown buildings should mar the view along the "Avenue of the Presidents." That led to the formation of the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Commission and the total redevelopment of the Avenue with the new hotels, office buildings and high-rise apartments that flank it today.

Just off Seventh Street, between Pennsylvania Avenue and Indiana Avenue, stood the Apex Liquor Store, which prospered by selling wine and whiskey in half-pint bottles to the disreputable characters who frequented that neighborhood. The Apex too was removed in the push to gentrify the Avenue. Running northward on

Seventh Street were the less elegant shoe stores, apparel stores and hardware stores, many of them Jewish-owned, that would be ransacked and burned down twelve years later in the riots that followed Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination. The stores that were not destroyed in those riots were gated and padlocked for good.

Until that part of the City was redeveloped, long after my arrival in Washington, its tenderloin district, with burlesque theaters, adult bookstores, peep shows and penny arcades, ran northward on Ninth Street from Pennsylvania Avenue on up to Massachusetts Avenue. Many of the ramshackle buildings housing these sleazy enterprises were torn down to make way for the new FBI headquarters building.

The old Washington's commercial core lay in the rectangle bounded by F and G Streets and Seventh and Fifteenth Streets. That's where folks headed on Saturdays to do their shopping, no matter where they lived, because there were not as yet any shopping centers or malls in the suburbs. The flagship stores downtown were Hecht's on 7th Street and Woodward & Lothrop ("Woodie's") in the block bounded by 10th Street, 11th Street, F Street and G Street. Those with more money headed for Garfinkle's, at 14th and F Streets, at the rear of the Willard Hotel. The specialty stores were also clustered on F and G Streets: the elegant men's clothing stores, Lewis & Thos. Saltz, Raleigh's and the University Shop, and the tony women's dress shops: Jelleff's, Rizik's and Saks Jandel. At noontime, shoppers and office workers could take lunch in the tea room at Hecht's or Woodies', go for ice cream to Gifford's on F Street, or for more substantial lunches to the Blue Mirror Sandwich Shoppe, also on F Street. Another popular eatery, Bassin's, was on 14th Street, where visitors to Washington now enter the J. W. Marriott Hotel. Recalling the now-vanished F Street scene, a *Washington Post* reporter was to say, years later, that

*the vanished [Blue Mirror Sandwich Shoppe] and the gone-away people made the sluggish but beautiful desuetude of F Street special for natives like myself;*<sup>210</sup>

and recalled with regret the "evanescence of a time, a place," likening it to the "contrails of an angel's flight."<sup>211</sup>

On a Saturday night, white Washingtonians headed downtown to the entertainment district, perhaps to movies at the ornate theatres,

the RKO Keith's on 15<sup>th</sup> Street or the Loew's on F Street, or the Warner Theatre on 13<sup>th</sup> Street. Because segregation prevailed in the city's restaurants and theatres and night clubs, the nightlife for Washington's "colored" population was concentrated on U Street N.W., known then as "the Black Broadway," and especially at the Lincoln Theatre there.

For the haute monde, social life in Washington centered around the city's private clubs: the Metropolitan, the University Club, the Sulgrave Club on DuPont Circle, the Cosmos Club on Massachusetts Avenue and the Army-Navy Club on Farragut Square. All still stand today, looking now exactly as they did then. Or you took your date, if you had money, to one of the hotels for dinner and dancing, to the Statler on K Street, the Mayflower and, farther out on Connecticut Avenue, the Shoreham and the Wardman Park. In the ballrooms of these hotels, the state societies held their social functions. These organizations had been formed to provide social and professional contacts for Washingtonians newly-arrived from elsewhere; if you had just come from, say, Iowa, and were new in town, you could attend functions of the Iowa State Society, meet other Hawkeyes and assuage your loneliness. The same was true of other states as well.

Summing up, the nightlife in the 1950's when I arrived in Washington was rather tame, without the wide choice of nightclubs, theatre and other diversions that mark the scene today.

The old-line law firms and trade associations were still clustered on 15<sup>th</sup> Street and McPherson Square, but they were beginning to move north and west to the newer office buildings on K Street and lower Connecticut Avenue. If you look at the Shoreham Building at 15th and I streets, the Barr Building on Farragut Square and the Investment Building at 15th and K, you can picture what the downtown core looked like in those years.

In 1956, eleven years after the end of the war, the tremendous growth of the Maryland and Virginia suburbs had not yet occurred. Rosslyn was a large traffic circle at the southern end of Key Bridge, the terminus of a trolley line, along its rim an assortment of rundown pawnshops, gas stations and auto repair shops. Tyson's Corner was just that: a crossroads grocery store and smoke shop with gas pumps in front. In suburban Maryland, you drove out to Rockville on the Rockville Pike, then a narrow two-lane road cutting for most of that distance through rolling farmland. A golf

driving range stood where White Flint Mall stands today, and there was a small one-runway airfield where today cars by the hundreds park at Congressional Plaza.

The Metro had not yet been built. Instead, commuters and shoppers used the gray-and-green trolleys of the Capital Transit Co. The trolley cars ran on underground electric lines through the downtown area and as far north as Q Street on Wisconsin Avenue in Georgetown. In the middle of the Avenue at that point, a transit company employee was stationed in a pit between the tracks. When an outgoing trolley reached that point, it came to a halt; the employee climbed out of his hole, released the trolley car's connection to the underground cable and affixed its electric lines to the overhead cable so that it could proceed northward. For incoming trolleys, he followed the same procedure, in reverse.

Throughout the city, the trolley tracks were laid down the middle of the broad avenues. The stops were at concrete islands adjacent to the tracks. To reach the trolley, one had to cross from the sidewalk, past the parked cars, past one or sometimes two lanes of moving traffic, to the island. Needless to say, there were many fatalities down through the years, people killed as they ran to catch a trolley or after climbing down from the trolley and stepping off the island, trying to reach the safety of the sidewalk. When the trolleys were phased out and the tracks taken up or covered over, and buses became the mode of public surface transportation, their belching exhausts contributed to the urban air pollution. But they had the major advantage over trolleys that they could pull up to bus stops directly at the curb, and the infamous mid-avenue concrete islands could be taken up. In some of the cobblestoned side streets in Georgetown, you can still see the remnants of the trolley tracks running down the middle of the pavement.

A favorite weekend destination of mine was Cabin John, the terminus of the trolley to Glen Echo and its amusement park. That trolley passed through Georgetown on P Street, then crossed the Georgetown University campus and Foxhall Road. Then, running parallel to MacArthur Boulevard, it traveled like the Toonerville trolley, careening from side to side, through what was then an almost bucolic countryside. The right-of-way was so thickly overgrown that you could reach out through the trolley window and touch the branches from the nearby trees and shrubs. The trolley

line, with its tracks and the trestles that crossed the many ravines, still exists, but the trolley itself stopped running many years ago.

That was the city that I came to in February 1956. My new employer, the Bureau of National Affairs, Inc., was located at 1231 24th Street N.W., a one-story white brick building in what was then a dilapidated warehouse and light industrial district. The elegant hotels and high-rent office buildings now lining the streets in that area had not yet been built. Just to the north of the BNA building, on N Street, was Francis Junior High School, which had been built as a Negro school and still served that population. In fact, the entire residential neighborhood between M Street on the south, O Street on the north, New Hampshire Avenue to the east, and 24th Street on the west was then predominantly colored, as was a substantial part of the east side of Georgetown.

BNA had been founded in 1929 to provide information to government and private industry on trends in economics, taxes and labor relations. I was hired to fill a vacancy on the staff of one of its bi-weekly loose-leaf publications: "Collective Bargaining Negotiations and Contracts." We called it "CBNC" or "Kabunk." The job: editorial assistant; the pay, \$66.50 per week. Even in 1956, that salary was scarcely enough to live on, especially because, as a condition of my employment, I would have to join, and pay dues to, the Newspaper Guild. I was proud to be a member of the Guild, but its dues check-off, on top of the other deductions, would make my financial situation still more precarious. But, anxious to leave New York and anxious, too, to work at an honest-to-goodness job with a steady paycheck, however modest, I accepted the job and moved to Washington.

The staff at CBNC was talented and congenial. Its editor was Arnold W. Frutkin, or AWF as he identified himself in inter-office memos. Arnold was a Harvard graduate, then 35 years old, tall and slim, blue eyes with thinning sandy hair, and a Boston Brahmin inflection to his voice, immaculately dressed, low-key and even-tempered. Later, Frutkin became one of the first employees of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and had a stellar career there.

Second-in-command at CBNC was another Arnold, Arnold C. Sternberg. We referred to him by his initials, ACS, to distinguish him from the other Arnold, the boss. Sternberg had been a junior officer in the Navy in World War II, and, in 1947-1948, had been

among those heroic Jews who volunteered their services as skippers of the rag-tag fleet that ran the British blockade to bring Jewish immigrants and guns to Palestine. Now he was back in Washington. Arnold wore a perpetually world-weary expression on his face, his words coming in a low raspy voice from between tightly compressed lips. He later moved to Sacramento to become director of the California Department of Housing and Community Affairs.

Below Sternberg in the chain-of-command when I arrived at BNA was Homer Owen, another war veteran, slight, with thinning light-brown hair combed back from his receding forehead, watery blue eyes and a retiring personality. Homer had graduated from Reed College and had received a graduate degree from the ILR School four years before me, in 1951. While I was at BNA, Homer abruptly left the office, left Washington and headed west to work in the family business, a restaurant in Lancaster, California. When I asked my colleagues why anyone would make such a sudden and radical change in career, I learned the dismal truth. Homer had bid on a job opening at BNA that would have moved him from behind his desk to a position which required more public contact. He was told, firmly, that he could never get that kind of job at BNA. The reason: while still at Cornell, he had been subpoenaed by the House Un-American Activities Committee, investigating Communist Party activities at institutions of higher learning. At a Committee hearing, he had been questioned concerning his membership in the Communist Party and his knowledge of fellow party members, first as an undergraduate and, later, at Cornell. Whether he had testified or had taken the Fifth Amendment evidently made no difference. BNA was willing to employ him in a job that required no public contact, but could not afford to put him out there in the public eye. "Business, old buddy, you know how it is . . . just business." That was how it was in those days. Careers could be ruined by an informant or by a fellow-member who made the decision to save his own skin by naming names. Homer had had to go back home, aware that the doors to a professional career were closed to him.

The work at BNA was tedious and repetitive. In those pre-Internet days, newspapers from all over the country came into our office. We clipped them for articles reporting that a local employer had reached an agreement with the union representing its employees. Then we would call the employer or the union and get more detailed information on the settlement, both the wage and

non-wage terms. Sometimes we would receive the printed agreement in the mail. Contract provisions different from those that already appeared in the Report were added, and often highlighted, in the supplement that was sent out to the subscribers. Every quarter, we issued an update to “Basic Patterns in Union Contracts,” a database which informed BNA subscribers of trends in wages and fringe benefits and the non-monetary provisions.

My meager paycheck forced me to live in straitened circumstances. That meant a furnished room a short walk from the BNA offices, at 1421 21st Street N.W., part of the Hartnett Hall empire. The building that once bore the Hartnett Hall name still stands at the southwest corner of 21st and P Street. Mr. Hartnett owned properties up and down P Street and 21st Street and around the corner on O Street as well, and his tenants could take their meals in the restaurant at the corner building. Hartnett Hall was one of those places in Washington that catered to young singles like me, seeking to get a toehold in this new city, to men and women again on their own after an unhappy marriage, and to others who were just down on their luck.

In my small room, no larger than a prison cell, there was space only for a narrow single bed, a dresser, and a chair. The room was lit by a single bare light bulb in the ceiling; I could turn the light on and off by pulling a long chain that dangled over my bed. There was but one narrow window, opening onto 21st Street.

That first summer in Washington, I found it hard to get to sleep in the heat and humidity of the city, slept poorly, and awoke each morning with the sheet damp with sweat. Finally, I bought a Vornado fan that could be reversed to let air in or suck it out, and set it in the window. That made the nights more bearable but allowed even less sunlight into the room than before. Undoubtedly, dozens of newcomers to Washington or persons one step away from homelessness have lived in that room in the years since then, until they could get their bearings in the new city or until they could afford more comfortable lodgings.

My first months in Washington were a time of dangerous loneliness, recalling times of similar solitude in college and during college summers. I was about as low now as I had ever been. In the words of the popular song, it was a “long, long and lonely time,” a period of *katabasis*, for spiraling toward the bottom, when outwardly nothing is happening but when, according to the

philosophers, the stage is being set for the next phase in the soul's development. I, however, saw no signs that my soul was developing in healthy directions. Evenings and weekends were hard to get through. Exploring the city could be informative, but it was no fun without company. Always there was the knowledge that the dismal room at Hartnett Hall awaited me on the return from my outing.

In a welcome break from my solitude, I was invited for the family Seder in April 1956 to the home of Marvin Kaplan and his family in Anacostia. At that time, some parts of Anacostia were still heavily Jewish. Soon, when the heavy influx of African-American families got underway, the Jewish families would move out of Anacostia to Silver Spring and Takoma Park. Just so, the Kaplans, soon after my evening with them, moved to Shepherd Park in Washington, a neighborhood which in its turn was also to undergo racial change. There, Kaplan founded Neighbors, Inc., an organization that fought to keep the neighborhood integrated and resisted "blockbusting" practices. Still later, he was for many years the executive director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the umbrella organization for civil rights organizations.

My months of isolation ended when I came to know Noble Kimbrough Sneed III, who was renting a room in the same building on 21st Street. At the time, Kim, as he liked to be called, was 31, nine years older than I. He had been on active duty as a naval officer and was now employed on the legal staff of the Southern Railway at 15th and K Streets in Washington. Born and raised in Marshall, Virginia, about an hour's drive southwest of Washington, Kim spoke the slow courtly drawl of the Old Dominion.

Recently divorced, Kim was on his own at the time, but was dating a Navy lieutenant. Her name was Kimberly, or Kim., for short. The story ends with their marriage, Kim (Kimbrough) marrying Kim (Kimberly).

In September 1956, Kim Sneed and I moved out of Hartnett Hall and together rented a rowhouse at 1230 28th Street N.W. on the eastern edge of Georgetown. That was the start of what was to be a happy six months for me. The little house, still at that location, was picturesque, with bare plaster walls finished in a swirl pattern, a tiny first-floor living room and kitchen on the street level and two bedrooms upstairs, and a secluded garden in the rear where we took our coffee and rolls on sunny Sunday mornings. We decorated the living room walls with the bullfight posters which were all the rage

at the time, featuring the bullfighters Dominguin and Manolete on the *Plaza del Toros a las Cinco de la Tarde* (five o'clock in the afternoon). The bedroom windows were French doors, floor-to-ceiling, with a wrought-iron grill across the opening. At the curb outside our house were female ginkgo trees, very decorative but, when the fruit fell to the sidewalk and was crushed underfoot, exceedingly malodorous.

Just up the street from our house, at 2801 N Street N.W., was the Georgetown synagogue, Keshet Israel. I sometimes attended services there, and made the mistake of letting it be known that I lived less than a block away. As a result, I frequently received phone calls at 7:00 a.m.: "Meester Sex, ve nid you far a minyan!" Obedient to my religious obligation, I would roll out of bed, throw on some clothes and stumble up 28th Street to the synagogue. The rabbi, Philip Rabinowitz, was respected and revered by his congregation, serving as its spiritual leader for 34 years. On March 2, 1984, Rabbi Rabinowitz was murdered "in the line of duty," so to speak. His murderer has never been found, but it is thought that he was killed by one of the homeless men whom he had befriended and to whom he had given shelter and support.

In September 1956, a few months after the move to 28th Street, I ran into Elinor Schivik, whom I had known at Cornell. Ellie had graduated in June of that year and had just moved down to Washington for a job with "Agriculture." If everyone in those years who said they were working for "Agriculture" had been telling the truth, there would have been one Ag employee for every farmer. We soon caught on that those who claimed to be at Agriculture were working instead for the Central Intelligence Agency and had been instructed to say otherwise.

Of Norwegian ancestry, Ellie had grown up in Scotch Plains, New Jersey. With tightly-curled frizzy hair, stocky build, strong jaw, and squinty brown eyes, she was not a stunning beauty. More important to me than her looks was her temperament: Ellie had a sunny disposition, given to laughter, her face always ready to break into a wide smile. She bubbled with the excitement and enjoyment of life. She was just plain fun to be around.

Ellie was living in a group house on 29th Street, a few doors down from P Street and two blocks from my house on the eastern edge of Georgetown. We became close very quickly, I spending many pleasant evenings with her and the three other girls in that

house, she occasionally over at my house. Privacy was not a problem, because Kim and Kim were spending all their spare time together at her apartment. After the loneliness of the first nine months in Washington, to have this connection, not only with Ellie but with the other girls who were also living in that house and those who were dating them or just passing through, was balm for the soul.

Meanwhile, feeling the hot breath of the draft board on the back of my neck, I had enlisted in the U.S. Army Reserves and was assigned to the 352d Military Government Detachment. The 352d met twice weekly in a classroom in White-Gravener Hall on the campus of Georgetown University. I used to marvel, as I considered the name of the unit, that the Army had 351 other such units, and wondered where they were stationed. The 352d was not your usual Army unit, even in the Reserves. Ostensibly, its mission was to organize and maintain the functions of government in a foreign land after our armed forces had prevailed on the battlefield, much as the Occupation had done in Japan after the war and as we have more recently done in Iraq and Afghanistan. In reality, the twice-weekly meetings of the 352d and two weeks of active duty enabled high-level politicians and senior civil servants who had left active duty in World War II as commissioned officers to put in additional time in service so that they could retire at an even higher grade and with longer service time. Its members were majors, colonels, even generals. The late Senator Strom Thurmond, then a major general, was in that unit. I was one of its few enlisted men.

The weekly meetings of the 352d consisted of presentations by ambassadors and other diplomats and high-level government officials, speaking on the issues of the day. The annual two weeks of active duty (summer camp) were held at Fort Meade, Maryland, headquarters of the Second Army, just a half-hour's drive from Washington. For those two weeks, our billets were on the post and we went through our prescribed exercises during the day, then at night caroused in Washington before returning to Fort Meade for bed check. It was all very casual, from the top down. To maintain my status in the Reserves, I had only to meet one requirement: to attend every meeting. One absence was permitted; after the second absence, the unit commander sent the name of the absent soldier to his draft board.

Failing to appreciate the extraordinary advantages of my reserve assignment, I did not meet even that minimal attendance requirement. In early April 1957, I received in the mail an envelope bearing my “Hello” from Uncle Sam: Headquarters, Second Army, ordered me to report for active duty on April 27 at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, my expenses for travel from Washington to the post to be paid by the U.S. government. When I opened that letter, it didn’t take long to understand what it was: I had missed that second meeting of the 352d MG Detachment and was now to pay the consequences. Notified of my dereliction, my draft board, Local Board No. 17 in Upper Manhattan, had filled out its monthly quota of draftees with my name.

Recovering from the first shock, I regained my composure. Two years in the Army might not be so bad. My job at the Bureau of National Affairs was leading me nowhere. Maybe it would be best to get the Army thing over with and go on to the next chapter of my life. A master of rationalization, that’s what I was. I said goodbye to the two Kims. There was an affectionate parting from Ellie Schivik as we assured each other that this was only *au revoir* and not goodbye. I packed a few civilian clothes and other belongings, and boarded a DC-3 at National Airport for the flight to Columbia, South Carolina. It was my first time on an airplane.

## "YOU'RE IN THE ARMY NOW!"

If I were to start out by describing my military service as a life-changing experience, I would hardly be the first to do so. Every ex-serviceman does, whether he served in wartime or in peacetime (think of James Jones's *From Here to Eternity*), in an exotic climate abroad or at a backwater post Stateside, in a foxhole or behind a desk. During my Army tour, I lived and worked closely with people whom I would not have known in civilian life; it toughened me physically and mentally; and left me with the strength and confidence that, after going through my Army service, I could deal with almost anything.

On that day in late-April, 1957, when the plane from Washington landed at the Columbia, South Carolina, airport, an Army bus was at the airport waiting to whisk me out to the processing center at Fort Jackson, at the edge of the city. Once there, I took the oath of allegiance required of every inductee, received my dog tags (Serial Number ER 13569180, Religion J, Blood Type B Pos), and my GI issue of uniforms—field jacket, summer khakis, green fatigues, boots and skivvies—and was instructed to report to Company D, Second Training Battalion, then beginning its eight-week basic training cycle.

On reaching the Second Battalion's cluster of World War II-vintage buildings, I was assigned to the barracks of the Second Platoon, D Company, and dumped my suitcase on one of the thirty cots placed side by side in the open middle area. I hung the uniforms on the short rod next to the bed and, next to them on one wire hanger, the single outfit of civilian clothes that we were allowed to keep for weekend leaves. The rest of the government-issue gear I arranged in the footlocker placed at the foot of the bed. Toiletries, stationery and socks were to be displayed in the top tray

of the footlocker in strict accordance with the AR (Army Regulations), ready for inspection at a moment's notice.

I learned quickly how to make my bed the Army way. On the iron-frame bunk, the olive-drab wool blanket had to be pulled so tightly across the bed that the drill sergeant could supposedly bounce a quarter off it. The sheet underneath was to be folded down over the blanket top with exactly fourteen inches showing, the second blanket, covering the pillow, tucked in from the top of the bed down, its lower edge just two inches beyond the folded-over sheet.

At one end of the open enlisted men's sleeping area were the private quarters for unmarried NCOs, the latrines at the other end. In these older barracks, there were no partitions between the toilets and no urinals either, just a long metal trough. You had no choice but to accept the lack of privacy. What you were used to doing at home or at the office behind a locked door, you now did in front of, or next to, ten other guys, all of them trying as you were to adjust to that loss of privacy. Serving in the French Army in World War I, Maurice Sachs (no kin of mine) had the same experience: "*There are timid ones who resist going to the latrine to the limit of human strength, until they can crouch there alone.*"<sup>212</sup>

In World War II novels and movies, we followed a platoon or squad that included, in an ironclad formula, an Irishman, an Italian, a Jew and a Pole or other Eastern European. Just like those fictional GIs, the men in my platoon were a rich gumbo of men from every American caste and class, race and ethnic origin. There were draftees like me, obligated to serve two years, enlistees who had volunteered for three years and reservists serving their six-month active duty obligation. There were farmers, working stiffes, college graduates, and a smattering of men who had been given a choice by the local judge: two years in reform school or three years in the Army. Some choice! There were rural Puerto Ricans, speaking hardly a word of English, and a sizable contingent of Hungarians who spoke even less. These young Hungarians had escaped from their motherland when Soviet troops crushed their struggle for freedom in 1956. They had enlisted in the U.S. Army in Frankfurt, Germany, on the promise that, after their tour of duty was up, they would qualify immediately for U.S. citizenship. Since most of them had served in the Hungarian Army before their escape, they were already well-trained and in top physical condition.

There were also country boys from Appalachia. In contrast to the Hungarians, they were in poor shape physically. One of them, barely twenty years old, had rotten stumps where teeth should be, the stumps barely visible above the gumline. He had probably never seen a dentist. On one of his first days at Fort Jackson, Army dentists pulled every tooth from his mouth and fitted him with dentures, all courtesy of Uncle Sam and the taxpayers. In my company, there were also blacks from the rural South who had probably never before eaten, lived and slept with white men. One such recruit, tall and rail-thin, a student at Fort Valley State College near Valdosta, Georgia, wore a nylon stocking on his head, pulled down almost to the eyebrows. To me, he might as well have been an alien from another planet. Most of the draftees were good ol' boys, white, for whom living with Negroes was anathema and taking orders from Negro noncoms even more so. But no one had a choice in the matter; in "this man's Army," you had to get along and keep your nose clean.

The Army's mission then as now was to take these recruits and turn them into capable soldiers, forcing them into the GI mold, subordinating their individual identities and needs to those of the group, and to Uncle Sam's needs as well. The Frenchman Maurice Sachs had the same sense, as he writes in his memoirs:

*Here each man meets many he will never know anywhere else; elsewhere a suit, an apartment, a car, preferences, specialties, prejudices [and] kilometers separate them. Here, nothing! That is what is fascinating about military service, the fact that it releases the timid and constrains the boasters; the innocent acquire their first sexual experience, the abstemious their first drink, those who have been raised in luxury learn a salutary discomfort, while those who have not always eaten eat all they want, those who have commanded obey in their turn, and those who have obeyed sometimes command. In a space limited to a few square yards, you learn the universe, with all its sufferings, its intrigues, its injustices, and by rubbing against each other, like the pebbles on a beach, you get rid of the rough edges, you get smoothed down, you take shape.<sup>213</sup>*

The English novelist Robert Graves had a different perspective:

*What I disliked most in the Army was never being alone, forced to live and sleep with men whose company in many cases I would have run miles to avoid.<sup>214</sup>*

Indelibly imprinted in the memory of every man and woman who has seen military duty is the drill instructor, the DI, whose task it is to transform raw recruits into well-trained soldiers. The drill instructors for my training cycle at Company D, Second Training Battalion at Fort Jackson were two seasoned noncoms who had volunteered for the task and were well-suited by temperament to accomplish what the Army asked of them.

The first of these was Sergeant Leon Tucker, a black man who resembled the comedian Bill Cosby. He was the day-in-day-out disciplinarian, the man who checked us out at morning formation. To satisfy him, khakis or fatigues had to be neatly pressed with knife-edge creases, our boots spit-shined and finished off with Five-Day Deodorant Pads, our brass polished with Brasso. There was no talking back to him, no explanations accepted for why a task remained undone. To all such attempted explanations, his stock rejoinder was "Did you get any sleep last night?" He could be crude, too. At the slightest sign of a mustache on a recruit's upper lip, he put his face into the recruit's and bellowed, "You're trying to cultivate on your upper lip what I grow wild down there where the sun don' shine. I'll give you fifteen minutes to get rid of it." I kept my face well-shaven and avoided any run-ins with Sergeant Tucker.

Not so with the other drill instructor, Sergeant Billy Ray Fulton, a short compactly-built man with boyish features. Hidden behind his open friendly countenance was a tough personality bordering on the sadistic. It seemed to me that he took particular pleasure in breaking me down, to cram this Jewish college kid from up North into the Army's one-size-fits-all mold. He deliberately mispronounced my name, calling me "Satches." On days when the temperature hovered in the low 90's and the company was engaged in infantry exercises in the boondocks, he assigned me to the water wagon, a two-wheeled cart. Another recruit and I filled two 36-gallon galvanized tin drums with cold water, lifted them onto the wagon, then hitched ourselves like a team of oxen to the yoke of the cart. Our job was to pull that wagon from the nearest road, where the drums had been filled from the water truck, across the 200-300 yards to the site of the morning's training exercise. It was backbreaking work, since we had to traverse the open fields through scrub growth and the fine sand underfoot. As my partner and I hauled the heavy-laden water wagon to the troops in the field,

I roundly cursed Sergeant Fulton under my breath, but resolved to tough out whatever duty he threw at me.

It could have been worse. During my eight weeks of basic training I was never confined to quarters or deprived of a weekend pass, never pulled KP duty and was never ordered as others were to get down on hands and knees and manicure the lawn in the company area with nail scissors and a toothbrush. Nor was I given the worst assignment a recruit could pull: ladling the grease out of the grease pit behind the mess hall.

Another recruit whom Sergeant Fulton liked to bully or, as he preferred to say, toughen up, was David Halberstam. He was what we called a six-month wonder, a reservist serving his brief stint on active duty. Sergeant Fulton had even more trouble with his name than with mine. Claiming that he could not pronounce the name Halberstam, he called him Hammerstammer, and assigned him more than his share of dirty jobs around the barracks. Still, he was out in six months. When his tour was up, Halberstam returned to the staff of the *Nashville Tennessean*, where he was in the right spot to cover the racial tensions of the early 60's. From there he moved to the *New York Times*, winning a Pulitzer Prize for his on-the-scene reporting from Vietnam. I like to think that his eight weeks at Fort Jackson served him well when he entered the combat zone alongside the "grunts" in 'Nam.

During our eight weeks of basic training, we did the things that Army recruits have done since the draft began: we fired at targets with our 30 cal. carbines; we donned gas masks and stumbled around in a tent as tear gas was released inside; we threw dummy hand grenades at rusted-out jeeps; and we wriggled on our bellies under a network of barbed wire while a machine gun fired live ammunition (or at least we were told it was live) overhead.

On rainy days, we stayed indoors to watch Army training films. One such film, of World War II vintage, introduced us to map reading. A group of officers is in the field, poring over a map. The senior officer, pointing to the map, says "This, gentlemen, is the lay of the land." Cut to a pin-up girl, in cut-off shorts and a brief halter, white with black polka dots, the pin-up striking an alluring pose, one hand on her hip, the other to her head. I am sure that this film is not being shown anymore. Another film alerted us to the danger of venereal disease. It, too, had probably been produced originally for World War II GIs. The scene: a bar off-post, a GI in uniform

at one end, a singularly unattractive woman at the other. As the GI downs one drink after another, the woman at the other end of the bar becomes more and more attractive, echoing the old saw that “by candlelight, every country wench is handsome.” At the end of the film, the GI and his pick-up leave the bar together, arm-in-arm. The lesson was clear: a judgment made cloudy by alcohol can give you momentary pleasure and weeks of regret while your body fights to overcome a venereal disease infection.

The Army’s attitude toward sex was clear: You want it, soldier, we’ll protect you up to a point, but, after that, you’re on your own. In Frank McCourt’s memoir, *Tis*, he recalled his duty as a supply clerk in Germany in the 1950’s:

*[T]he captain tells me I’m staying on as clerk in charge of supplies. I’ll be responsible for sheets, blankets, pillows and condoms which I’ll distribute to dog-handler trainees from all over the European Command, making sure everything is returned when they’re leaving, everything but the condoms, ha ha ha.*<sup>215</sup>

Like everyone else in the barracks, I received fresh bed linens once a week, but, unlike McCourt’s dog-handler trainees, no allotment of condoms. Sex for the single man—that was his business, as long as he didn’t get infected. Sex for married GI’s—the Army cooperated by authorizing conjugal visits from wives after the first eight weeks of basic training in special barracks set aside for that purpose.

A man in my platoon from Georgia, no more than 22 years old, had married just before entering the service. He arranged to have his wife come up to the post for that first weekend of permissible conjugal visits. All week long he walked around with a foolish grin on his face, no doubt anticipating the pleasures in store for him. While he and the handful of other married men looked forward to connubial bliss in the arms of their wives, I was left to my unfulfilled fantasies. Somehow the all-male environment in the Army made that feeling of sexual longing especially acute. As Sam Cooke sang it:

*Another Saturday night and I ain’t got nobody;  
I got some money ‘cause I just got paid.  
Oh, how I wish I had some chick to talk to;  
I’m in an awful way.*<sup>216</sup>

Aside from that "awful" longing, the constant physical activity during the eight-week basic training cycle had the effect on me that the Army intended: when it was over, I was in top physical condition, ready for the rigors of the "grand finale," the march out to the bivouac area, eighteen miles from our barracks.

It was late June, a hot, humid day, the temperature in the high 80's. We put on our fatigues and boots, strapped on our packs and bedrolls and headed out on foot along the narrow country road leading from the barracks to the bivouac area. Sergeant Fulton jogged backwards alongside us, keeping his eyes on us, calling out "Go, go, go. . . keep up the pace . . . step it up. . . let's hear it . . . sound off like you got a pair!" We responded as members of Uncle Sam's all-male army:

*Hup . . . tup . . . thrup . . . four . . .*

*I know a gal from Kansas City*

*She's got freckles on her titty.*

*Sound off. . . one two*

*Sound off. . . three four*

*Cadence count: one two three four*

*. . . one two . . . three four!"*

As the sun moved higher in the cloudless sky, Sergeant Fulton lost his zeal, and the pace began to flag. It was not the Bataan Death March, to be sure. The drill instructors did not bayonet you if you fell out of formation, and there was no threat that the column of marchers would be strafed by enemy warplanes. But it was grueling nevertheless. Several of the men dropped out, their bodies unable to take them even one step further. There was no penalty for dropping out; you were simply picked up in a truck and allowed to ride the rest of the way.

Even though it would cost me nothing to be among those picked up in a truck and driven to the bivouac area, I made up my mind that I would not be one of the dropouts. As if on automatic pilot, I put one foot in front of the other and walked, and walked, and walked. As I trudged along, I found it helpful to imagine a large glass of ice-cold orange juice: the gleaming glass and the clinking ice cubes, and then the intense orange color of the juice and finally, the drinking of it. In his memoir, *Man's Search for Meaning*,<sup>217</sup> Victor Frankl credited that same visualization technique with saving his life in the Nazi death camps. In the direst of conditions, with Death

a constant companion, Frankl found strength and comfort in visualizing his wife, whom he had married shortly before his deportation. I do not have the audacity to compare my experience to his, a march through the South Carolina sand hills to the horror of Auschwitz, nor can an inanimate glass of orange juice compare to the image of one's loved one, but the visualization technique was the same. When we finally arrived at the bivouac area. I had the satisfaction of having accomplished something that I thought was beyond my limits. It was one of the highlights of my young life.

Returning to our barracks at the end of the bivouac, we did not march the eighteen miles, as we had on the way out; instead we rode back in a convoy of trucks, in faceless green-fatigue anonymity. A sixteen-year old girl stood on her front porch at the roadside, watching the convoy pass by. From the back of one of the trucks, Santangelo, a strapping guy from South Philadelphia, called out to her, "I'm comin' back to f— ya." She ran into the house and told her Daddy. He complained to post headquarters, and headquarters quickly identified the company that had returned from the bivouac area that day. The only missing piece in the puzzle was the identity of the culprit. It didn't take the training cadre long, using standard Army tactics, to figure that out. On our return to the company area, we were called out into formation. The officer in charge reported what had happened, and said, "Now, the man who did that has two choices: he can step forward and own up, or the whole company is confined to quarters for 48 hours." It took perhaps 30 seconds for Santangelo to step out from the ranks and identify himself. Ruining his impulsive remark, he was led off to be dealt with in accordance with the Uniform Code of Military Justice. He did not return to the barracks in our training cycle.

The eight weeks of basic training were not all grime and sweat. The company first sergeant had a lucrative sideline, as owner of a fleet of white Chrysler 12-passenger limousines. Driven by trainees like me, his limos each weekend fanned out in every direction, north, south and west. For a reasonable price, we could sign up as one of his passengers. If we did, we got a bonus: we received our weekend pass at eight o'clock on Saturday morning instead of having to wait until noon. Thanks to that entrepreneurial first sergeant, I often rode up to Washington in one of his limousines to see Ellie Schivik. In those days before the construction of the interstate highway system, we traveled on the old U.S. system,

sometimes no more than narrow two-lane roads, all the way north from Columbia to Washington. It took twelve hours to reach our destination. The prospect of time spent with Ellie made the twelve hours up and the twelve hours back seem worthwhile.

Those were hectic weekends. I would arrive in Washington Saturday evening, tired from the long drive, then party until the early morning hours, sleep late on a couch in Ellie's living room, and leave again on Sunday afternoon, riding all night to get back to the post by Monday morning reveille. I saw Ellie on four or five such weekends, then the relationship withered through distance and lack of interest. This separation was different from my earlier long-distance romance with Iris. It was more like "out of sight, out of mind," than "distance only lends enchantment" or "absence makes the heart grow fonder." Ellie was soon to leave Washington to return to her ancestral roots in Norway, marrying an officer in the Norwegian merchant marine and opening an English language school in Oslo. She has lived there for more than fifty years.

On weekends when I did not travel north to Washington, I made it a point to explore South Carolina, always by myself. Not for me the weekend spent idly in the day room, shooting pool and watching television or lounging in the enlisted men's service club.

On one such weekend, I arrived in Myrtle Beach late on a Saturday night at the height of the summer season, without a hotel reservation. On a private's pay, I could not afford a room at the luxury oceanfront hotels and the other less-expensive hotels were booked up. Late that night, at my wit's end, I stopped at a seedy hotel off the boardwalk and was told by the innkeeper that the only bed available was in the garage behind the hotel; it would cost me \$3.00 for the night. Ready to sleep almost anywhere, I headed for that garage and found an old rusted iron bedstead there, tucked away in a corner amid a jumble of auto repair tools and spare parts. No bedsheets, no blankets, just a bare mattress and a dirty pillow. Thinking to myself, "Any port in a storm," I wrapped my uniform shirt around the pillow, flung myself onto the bed and soon fell sound asleep.

On another weekend pass I visited Charleston, bringing back with me a lasting impression not so much of its antebellum charm and storied past but of intense heat, cloying dampness and of mosquitoes, thousands of them. To bemused onlookers I must have resembled Harold Lloyd in his old one-reelers, as I walked down

the cobblestoned streets of Old Charleston in my summer khakis, using a rolled-up newspaper to swat vigorously at the small brown mosquitoes as they alit on my uniform and my exposed skin. I was certain that if I didn't get them before they got me, I would end up as Dr. Walter Reed did in Panama, a victim of yellow fever or malaria.

Remaining at Fort Jackson on another weekend, I took a bus into downtown Columbia, capital of the Palmetto State. The city had none of Charleston's antebellum charm, perhaps because much of the city's center was torched by General Sherman's Union troops in the last months of the Civil War. It was, as novelist Pat Conroy has written,

*a difficult city to love . . . Its summers are merciless and its winters are bitter, and it has all the homeliness of America's industrial midland . . . [It is] an armpit of a city.*<sup>218</sup>

Still, having committed to spending the weekend close to the post, I tried to make the most of my afternoon at leisure. I have always had a zest for the outré and the out-of-the-way, for getting lost intentionally and reaching destinations not mentioned in the tourist guidebooks. Finding myself on the fringe of the commercial area, I headed down a cobblestoned street that paralleled the Congaree River, the river running perhaps seventy yards to my right. Then, looking for a way to get to the river itself to take advantage of the cooling breezes there, I found a break in the dense underbrush where an unpaved lane ran off to my right. Guessing that this lane, hardly wide enough for one car, would take me to the water's edge, I turned onto it. The road led through that thick underbrush, under a canopy of overhanging trees, to a small clearing at the water's edge. Before me the river flowed by sluggishly.

Turning inland, I encountered a surreal moonscape, or Latexscape, if you will. On the muddy ground at my feet and draped on the bushes and low-hanging tree branches were used condoms, hundreds of them, ground into the mud or draped limply over low-hanging branches like the silvery seedpods of catalpa trees. Clearly, I had stumbled onto a local lover's lane. Thinking it best not to linger and possibly get in the way of the next couple that might be driving down that lane, I quickly retraced my steps and returned to the city's more familiar and less threatening commercial district.

At the end of basic training, I had ten days of leave before reporting back to Fort Jackson for the "second eight," the eight weeks of advanced training. I had been told that GI's could fly stand-by on military aircraft. You simply arrived at the "terminal," told the dispatcher where you were headed, and waited until a plane was ready to take off to that destination. If there was space available, you were allowed on board. The first time I tried this, I had the good fortune to find a plane flying from Columbia to Andrews Air Force Base in southeast Washington. It was an Air Evac plane, a DC-3 outfitted for use in airlifting wounded men out of a battle zone. The "flight attendants" were actually nurse lieutenants. I have never been on a smoother ride, nor had attendants more solicitous of my welfare, than on that plane. By contrast, later on in my Army hitch, I flew in a huge Globemaster cargo plane from Mitchell Field on Long Island to Altus Air Force Base in Oklahoma. In the plane's vast cargo compartment, I sat by myself in a mesh bucket seat against the fuselage wall. The roar from the four engines, especially the one next to the fuselage, seemingly only a few feet from my head, was deafening.

On another occasion, I hitchhiked from Fort Jackson to Washington. In 1957, you could do that without feeling that your life was in danger, but "thumbing a ride" still had its perils. Just north of the Carolina border, an eighteen-wheel semi stopped for me. I climbed up into the cab with the driver, pleased that my trip was going so well. He was headed for Winchester, Virginia, which would put me within an hour's drive from Washington. Eventually our conversation took a turn for the lewd and suggestive, and soon the truckdriver put his right hand on my thigh and began moving the hand upward. I said immediately, "Stop the truck, lemme outtahere." Fortunately, he did not object or force himself on me; he pulled the truck over to the shoulder and I jumped out.

I found myself on the outskirts of Burlington, North Carolina. Hearing music nearby, I arrived after a short walk at a dance hall, a big barn-like building with walls of raw unfinished pine, where a dance was in progress. I opened the door and stepped inside. Seeing that women and men had come not in pairs but on their own, I asked an attractive girl standing near me to dance. We danced one dance, then another. As we swayed back and forth in time to the music, she whispered in her Carolina drawl, "This ain't yo' type of crowd. Some of these men got knives on 'em. They can be real

mean and dangerous. Yo'd best be gettin' out of here." I needed no further cautioning. Without waiting for the music to end, I thanked that pretty girl for the dance and for her advice, and beat a hasty retreat out of the dance hall. Oh, the risks that you take when you're young!

After basic training, the Army sent those who had enlisted for three years to the specialized schools for the training they had asked for when they enlisted. The two-year draftees who were college graduates or who had had some college received orders to stay at Fort Jackson for clerk-typist school, to be trained as company clerks or in some other clerical capacity, or they were directed to the Army Finance School at Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indiana. Those with no education were generally assigned to the combat arms: advanced infantry, armored, artillery or transportation, or to cooks' school. I was in the group that was ordered to stay at Fort Jackson and attend clerk-typist school. For eight weeks, the Army tried to teach me touch-typing. It failed, as have all other subsequent efforts, so that even now, as I type this text on the computer keyboard, I am still, more than five decades later, using the tips of my index fingers.

As the "second eight" drew to a close I came without forewarning to a fork in the road, with only seconds to decide which road to travel but knowing that the decision carried with it significant consequences. As we stood in ranks in formation one morning, the company sergeant major called out, "Anybody here speak Hebrew?" What's this all about, I asked myself. It ran through my head that if I did not step forward at that moment, I might be ordered to Korea. Although the shooting war there had long since ended, I pictured Korea as still very primitive and I knew that the weather could be nasty in the wintertime, the Arctic air blasting across the 38th Parallel from the mountains to the north. I wanted no part of that. I did not even pause to consider whether I had learned enough Hebrew in my four years of Talmud Torah at Ohav Sholaum to prepare me for this as-yet-unspecified assignment. Seeing this as an escape from two years in Korea, I stepped forward and said that, yes, I could speak Hebrew. The result: I received orders to report, after a two-week leave, to Camp Wolters in Mineral Wells, Texas, to serve as the Jewish chaplain's assistant there. Since there were not enough Jewish servicemen at Camp Wolters to warrant an ordained rabbi as Jewish chaplain, I was to fill that role.

On reporting for duty at Camp Wolters on September 16, 1957, I found out almost immediately that the Army had screwed up, as it often does. There was no slot for a Jewish chaplain's assistant in the camp's Table of Organization, as there were not enough Jews on the post to justify such a slot, even on a part-time basis. I would have to be slotted into another MOS (Military Occupational Specialty). Noticing in my folder that I had previously been employed as an editor at the Bureau of National Affairs, Inc., the personnel interviewer at the post asked if I could handle being a reporter for the *Camp Wolters Trumpet*, the post newspaper. I said yes, I thought I could do that. So that became my assignment for the duration of my Army tour. I also conducted Friday night services for those few Jews on the post who acknowledged their Jewishness and felt the need to come together, more or less regularly, as *K'lal Yisrael*, a Jewish community.

Mineral Wells is an hour's drive west of Fort Worth, the larger city that called itself "Cowtown" or "Where the West Begins." Continuing west from Mineral Wells, you cross 280 miles of desert until you reach the West Texas oil country. There was no oil in the ground near Mineral Wells. Its valuable subterranean resource was water, the freshwater springs that gave the town its name and that had made it a popular destination for vacationers since the arrival of the railroad in 1891. The springs produced water with a high mineral content that was said to be a cure-all for mental ailments and promoted "regularity." In fact, Mineral Wells proclaimed itself to be the town "Where America Drinks Its Way to Health." Among the notables, distinguished and notorious, who visited Mineral Wells to "take the waters" or to entertain the hotel guests were Ronald Reagan, Herbert Hoover, Will Rogers, Clark Gable, Judy Garland and, under aliases, the outlaws Bonnie and Clyde.

The largest building in town was the Baker Hotel, opened to great fanfare in 1929, an impressive fourteen-story building with 452 rooms, its exterior faced with red brick and limestone. The Baker featured a rooftop ballroom with a thirty-mile view in all directions. It has stood empty since 1972, although some of the public rooms are rented out for social occasions. It has also been the site of well-publicized paranormal investigations, searching for the ghosts said to haunt the place.

Equally well-known as a resort destination was the Crazy Hotel, built in 1927 atop the town's "crazy water" springs. The hotel

featured a bar that offered some thirty different local therapeutic waters, including the nationally-advertised Pronto-Lax, a potent concoction of the local springwater at forty times its normal strength. Large restrooms were conveniently situated next to the bar, for use when Pronto-Lax had done its work. The Crazy Hotel now has a second life as a retirement home.

By the time I reached Mineral Wells in 1957, the town's glory days were over; it had gone to seed. Aside from the two major hotels, the town's commercial center was a motley collection of dilapidated two-story buildings, with tin-roof arcades extending from the building façade across the sidewalks to shield pedestrians from the blazing summer sun. On the outskirts of town was a nondescript assortment of used-car lots, Dairy Queens and other such drive-ins, an open-air movie theater and one or two bowling alleys. Because of the army post and its hospital, many of the town's permanent residents were military retirees who took advantage of the hospital for their medical treatment and did their shopping at the Post Exchange and the commissary. In one of my first letters home after arriving in Mineral Wells, I described it as a "dirty, old, boring town," and that remained my judgment over the fifteen months I was stationed there.<sup>219</sup>

Camp Wolters, a five-minute drive east of the city on U.S. 180, was situated on that vast expanse of undulating hills and mesas, of mesquite, sagebrush and cottonwood, that is north central Texas. When I first arrived at the post, my heart sank. I was truly in the back of the beyond. Looking back on it, I think of Camp Wolters as the real-life stand-in for the Camp Swampy of the Beetle Bailey comic strip. Behind the elaborate masonry-and-stucco gate marking the entry to the post, all was browns and grays, a collection of nondescript military buildings huddled at the base of a mesa. I would come to find out that central Texas features unparalleled extremes in temperature: hot, dry summers, with temperatures often climbing above 100 degrees, and biting cold winters, with the infamous "blue northers" sweeping down across the Nebraska and Oklahoma prairie into central Texas. In between were furious sandstorms, the wind-driven sand stinging your face and feeling gritty in your mouth. Another serious environmental problem were the locusts. The year I was there must have been the seventh year of their cycle, because there was a plague of the black critters, so many of them that your car could skid sideways on a roadway made

slick by thousands of the dead insects. On weekend visits to Fort Worth, I saw them crawling over the mannequins in the department store windows.

Camp Wolters had come into existence in the 1930's as a Texas National Guard training center. During World War II, it had been an infantry replacement training center, the largest in the country, eventually housing up to 30,000 men. Also on the grounds during the war was a camp for German prisoners-of-war; they were loaned out to local cattlemen to labor as ranch-hands in place of the young locals who had gone to war. After the war, Camp Wolters was deactivated, only to reopen a year later as an Air Force base. On July 1, 1956, it began its fourth life as one of the Army's two main helicopter training bases. Forty thousand helicopter pilots were trained there, including nationals of many of our allies and police officers from many jurisdictions. At its peak, the Primary Helicopter School at Fort Wolters was graduating six hundred pilots a month; many of them were later to serve, and some to die, in Vietnam. Fort Wolters was deactivated and "surplused" in 1973.<sup>220</sup> That land, where once were quartered helicopter pilots and ground crews, combat engineers and enlisted men like me, where helicopters by the dozens were parked on the tarmac, is now an industrial park. A memorial wall, much like the one on the Mall in Washington, D.C., bears the names of men who trained as chopper pilots at Wolters and were later killed in 'Nam.<sup>220</sup>

All that, however, lay in the future when I arrived in September 1957. At that time, Camp Wolters was a sleepy post where the military went about its business in a state of self-satisfaction and semi-tropical torpor. It was not a place where reputations were made, where you served with the knowledge that the higher-ups would spot you and advance you rapidly through the officer grades. Quite the opposite, it was a backwater geographically and a sinkhole for military careers. The commanding officer, Colonel John L. Inskeep, was a good-natured man who had dedicated his life to military service but had resigned himself to his fate: he had progressed as far as he would go in the Army and this would be his last post before retirement. It was said that he was one of the few men in his class at West Point who had not reached the rank of general and, clearly, this weighed heavily on him. Mineral Wells was such a backwater that, according to camp gossip, when Colonel Inskeep received his orders assigning him to Camp Wolters as post

commander, his wife told him, "You go to Mineral Wells; I'm staying here in Washington." And so he did, maintaining a suite at the Bachelor Officers Quarters.

I did not have the prerogative of the colonel's lady to stay in Washington. Having arrived at Camp Wolters, there was no turning back, no telling the Pentagon: "I'm not going to like it here. Could you find another duty station for me?" In this resigned state of mind I reported for duty at post headquarters.

Despite the post's drawbacks and my apprehensions, I came, once I had adjusted to my surroundings, to regard my tenure at Camp Wolters as an extension of college life, free of responsibilities and free of care as long as you toed the line. The barracks, too, reminded me of college dormitories; they were of cinderblock painted a pale yellow, they were clean and modern, with the enlisted men billeted two to a room. Unlike the barracks at Fort Jackson, here the latrines had partitions between the toilets. Being stationed in the outback had its unique risks, however. Walking from building to building, you had to watch your step lest you rouse a sleeping rattler coiled at the base of one of the scrub mesquites on the post. In the mornings, before putting on your GI boots, you shook them out to be sure there were no scorpions inside. There were times when a scorpion did fall out and had to be swatted dead with the heel of the boot.

The working hours were regular, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and our weekends were free. The lower-rank enlisted men who were assigned to the headquarters detachment with me were for the most part college graduates or men who had at least some college. I enjoyed their company and was always saddened when their tour of duty was up and they left the post. My roommate was Charles R. Lewis, a native of Welch, West Virginia, in the heart of that state's coal-mining region. There was nothing in him of the mountaineer, the coal miner or the hillbilly. He was short, with large slate-gray eyes, his thick light-brown hair always carefully combed back across his head, and he had a languid, almost effeminate, voice. When I knew him, he had two more years of college left at the University of Miami. He had perhaps elected to go there to put as much distance as he could between himself and his former life in West Virginia. Charlie had a passion for the jazz singers of that era: Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, Della Reese and Anita O'Day. We spent many of

our leisure hours stretched out on our cots, listening to jazz from his extensive record collection.

About six months before the end of the tour, Charlie met and fell in love with the daughter of a retired master sergeant living in Mineral Wells. She was tall and reed-thin, with a lantern jaw, frizzy black hair and small black eyes that peered out from behind thick black-rimmed eyeglasses. Neither in looks nor in personality did she appeal to me, nor, and this was far more important, could I understand what Charlie saw in her. It seemed to me that she could hardly believe her good fortune at having attracted a man who would rescue her from Mineral Wells and bring her to Coral Gables, Florida. She may have felt that this was all a dream from which she might soon awake and find that, no, it was only a dream. But, in fact, they did become engaged and were later married. Once again, I was given proof, if I still needed it, that, in women as in wine and clothes, there's no accounting for taste.

The post newspaper, the *Trumpet*, was produced by the Public Information Office, headed by Captain John Peterson. A grim humorless man with a jutting chin and a buzzcut hairdo, he had been an enlisted man in World War II and had received a temporary commission along with many others as the war wound down. Now he had the air of someone who had spent too much time in grade and wondered if he would ever get his promotion to major. The senior NCO was Master Sergeant Strayhorn, an officious little man, well into his 50's, a thirty-year man in the Army. The Army was his life: he had never married and lived in the quarters reserved for NCO's in the enlisted men's barracks. There were three other enlisted men: a genial fellow from Cleveland to whom the Army was a big lark, a ruddy-faced country boy from Iowa and me. Two civilian women, wives of officers on the post, rounded out the PIO staff.

My job as a reporter was multi-faceted: to gather the material for the stories and write them, lay out the paper for the civilian office staff, oversee the weekly press run and distribute the newspapers to various locations around the camp. The heart of the newspaper was not "news," but the items that any small-town newspaper thrives on: scores of twilight softball league games and the bowling leagues, reports of doings at the officers club, attractions at the post movie theatre and write-ups of plays and other entertainments that were put on in Mineral Wells and on the post.

At the beginning, I was naïve and self-important enough to think of myself as a journalist in uniform. I quickly learned that I would be no more than a flack for the military. That realization came when a visiting drama group from Weatherford Junior College, just east of Mineral Wells, came to the post and performed a play in the service club auditorium. Warming to my role as drama critic, I arrogantly panned the performance, charging the company with insulting our intelligence. When the story reached Captain Peterson's desk, he chewed me out. I had some nerve, he said, in writing such a review. The troupe from Weatherford, he went on, was doing its patriotic duty in performing for the men. My job as drama critic was to commend its efforts; an unfavorable review could cause them never to return to Camp Wolters. I took the message to heart, praising after that every group that came to perform at the post.

The job as newsman had its lighter side. With another enlisted man who came along as my photographer, I frequently covered events at the Officers Club. My favorites were the poolside fashion shows, travelogues and make-up demonstrations sponsored by the Officers Wives Club. Some of the younger wives with hourglass figures enjoyed posing for photographs in scanty swimsuits and cabana outfits. We were more than happy to accommodate them. Photos taken at the officers' club cocktail parties that I covered often showed Colonel Inskeep in his cups, a martini glass in his hand (probably his third or fourth), with other officers and their wives arrayed to his left and right looking equally *louche*.

At another such event, a Christmas-tree decorating party sponsored by the officers' wives, I met Pamela Haynes, a stunning brunette my age. I realized immediately that she was the daughter of Colonel Haynes, the commanding officer of the post hospital. Pamela looked and acted like the sorority girls I had known at Cornell, self-assured but not self-centered, with a cheerful attitude toward life. A few days after our first encounter, she called me at my desk at the public information office to invite me as her date on a winter hayride. I was delighted that she thought enough of me to ask me out. The hayride must have been a success, because a few days later she called again to tell me that her parents were having a Christmas open house, and would I please come as her guest. I accepted with pleasure.

When I arrived at Pamela's house, she greeted me at the door, wearing her holiday outfit, a forest green sweater over a white blouse, red-and-green tartan plaid skirt, a single strand of pearls and matching pearl earrings. The party was already in progress. A large, sumptuously decorated Christmas tree stood in the corner, near the fireplace, with brightly-wrapped gifts at its base. On the dining table were bowls of eggnog and French 75 punch and hors d'oeuvres platters. Everyone was in civilian clothes. Even so, I was acutely uncomfortable as I moved about the room with Pamela at my side, because I was encountering socially all the officers whom I regularly met and saluted in the course of my work on post. That called for a *savoir-faire* that I did not have. Had I met Pamela under other circumstances, we might have had a longer relationship, but I couldn't deal with these obstacles, so nothing came of it.

Camp Wolters offered a great variety of off-duty activities on the post. Many men participated in twilight softball and bowling, but these were not to my liking. I preferred to take part in the Camp Wolters Players, the little theatre group on post, which drew its members from every unit on the post, officers and enlisted men and their wives, doctors, dentists and civilian employees. Its organizer and director was Bob Jani, a talented showman who in civilian life had been on the staff of the Disney Studios in Burbank, California.<sup>221</sup> During my tour at Camp Wolters we performed "Teahouse of the August Moon," "The Seven Year Itch," and "Curse You, Jack Dalton," a take-off on 19th-century melodramas and a favorite of amateur theatrical groups. For the 1957 holiday season, our troupe also offered up a dramatization of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," but, because of my position on the post as the Jewish lay leader, I felt it best not to appear in that play.

These plays, and the rehearsals that led up to them, were my main on-post pleasure. Now you could put aside petty issues of rank and status and enter into the plane of make-believe, of Broadway drama. Bob Jani gave professional direction to this troupe of novices. We responded enthusiastically, although we fell far short of even regional-theater standards.. It's likely that the theatre group from Weatherford that I had earlier panned were better actors than we were. Nevertheless, we enjoyed our acting, came to know each other as men and women with personas different from those we assumed as servicemen and service wives, and our performances were "sell-outs."

I did not neglect during my fifteen months at Camp Wolters the responsibilities for which I had originally been assigned there: to serve as lay leader to the few Jews on the post. In that role, I regularly conducted Friday night Shabbat services in a room made available to us at the post hospital. However, on one occasion we came together for services at a mobile home rented by a Jewish serviceman and his wife, a convert to Judaism. She was expecting a baby at any time and could not leave her bed. To accommodate her and her husband, eight of us crammed into the expectant parents' trailer, keeping the front door open, not to welcome the prophet Elijah, as Jews do at Passover, but to get fresh air circulating into the stuffy interior.

I led Friday evening services almost every week when a *minyan* was present. Anticipating by many years the action of the Conservative movement, we of necessity counted women in the *minyan*, but even so, there were Fridays when we could not muster the required ten people and came together informally. Most of the regulars were doctors and dentists at the hospital, with one or two Jewish enlisted men participating as well. One of those who chose not to participate was a draftee from Brooklyn, Milt Trauenfeld. When we met, soon after my arrival on the post, he asked me in a conspiratorial whisper, "M.O.T., right?" Thinking that this was some secret society that he belonged to, I responded with a look of bewilderment. He must have thought to himself, "This guy doesn't have a clue," then went on, "You know, 'member of the tribe.'" Even then, it took me another moment before I realized that the "tribe" in question was the Jews. The roster of Jewish men that I had been given by the post personnel office also included Aaron Miller, a grizzled career Army master sergeant. When I invited him to services, he shrank from me as if I carried the plague. We would have to form our *minyan* without him as well.

In my role as "acting chaplain" to the Jewish troops, I developed an unwarranted reputation as the font of all information on Jewish matters, not only to the Jews on the post but to the non-Jews as well. In a letter home, I described myself as a "one-man Jewish Chautauqua Society," answering questions and dispensing information on Judaism to people who might never have met a Jew before. When the woman convert whom I wrote of earlier lost her father, she asked me if she might say *Kaddish* (the Jewish prayer recited on the death of a family member) for him, a non-Jew. It did

not occur to me to consult a rabbi before answering this vexing question. Instead, I responded immediately that yes, by all means, a *Kaddish* for her father was very appropriate. She was grateful for my flexibility in this informal *responsum*.

One of the great pleasures of being a lay chaplain was the cooperation I received gladly and without reservation from Father René Belanger, the Catholic chaplain, and the Rev. Charles Hopkins, his Protestant counterpart. I had only to make a list of my needs, and they made sure that the materials I had requested arrived on time. In that way, I received prayer books, Sabbath candles, yarmulkes and challah for our Friday night services.

It wasn't only the chaplains who helped out; I had full support all the way up the chain of command. In January 1958, I was at the Officer's Club, directing an evening of "Hail and Farewell" skits in which departing officers were "roasted" and officers newly-assigned to the post were welcomed. In that setting I met Colonel Inskeep informally for the first time. He evidently knew of me as the leader of Jewish services on the post, because he asked me how many attended each week. He was also aware of the requirement that ten men be present at Jewish services, because he expressed concern when I told him that we rarely had that number at our services. With a wry smile, he said he would see what he could do to get more Jewish GI's assigned to the post.

I had a similar experience with Colonel Meek, the post's Deputy Commander. He called me to ask how my congregation was doing and whether we had everything we needed, and told me to feel free to call on him for any assistance. I told him as well that our only need was for more Jewish servicemen. It felt good to know that the two top men on the post were concerned for the welfare of the Jewish serviceman.

That concern was evident in the support given us in our holiday preparations. In April 1958, I described in a letter to Mother the extraordinary lengths to which the camp administration went in its efforts to help us celebrate Pesach properly:

*At the [Wolters] hospital we have our own dishes and silver, one set for meat, the other for dairy. We have a cook who cooks only for us, and washes our dishes separately from the rest after we've eaten. We have borscht, matzoh, gefilte fish, etc., but as a rule we eat what's on the regular menu except we make sure it's properly prepared.*

For that Passover, Captain David Smith, a dentist at the post hospital, and his wife, Irene, asked me to preside at a Seder at their house. Our Haggadahs were provided by the Jewish Welfare Board. We read and sang our way through the entire Haggadah, not dispensing with the after-the-meal portion of it as we have done in more recent years. The next day, we attended services in Dallas at the Conservative synagogue, Shearith Israel, and attended the second Seder there as well. Four hundred people sat at tables that fanned out like spokes in a wheel from the raised central table at which the rabbi and his family were seated.

From our tablemates at the communal Seder, we learned what I later forgot and only recently relearned from a public television program on the subject: that, in the early years of the twentieth century, wealthy and well-connected German-American Jews, among them Oscar Straus, Jacob H. Schiff and Cyrus Sulzberger, alarmed at the influx of Eastern European Jews to the teeming streets of New York's Lower East Side, arranged to divert immigrant-laden ships from New York to Galveston, Texas.<sup>222</sup> From there, the new arrivals, more than 10,000 of them, fanned out all over the Midwest and Southwest, ending up in every large city and in villages where, sometimes, they were the only Jews within two hundred miles. The Jews who sat at the Seder table with us that evening were descendants of those Galveston Jews.

It would have been presumptuous of me to conduct services at Camp Wolters on the High Holydays and in any event beyond my capabilities. Instead, as Rosh Hashanah approached in September 1958, we contacted the rabbi at Ahavath Shalom, the Conservative synagogue in Fort Worth. He gladly invited us to attend services there. With the intervention, again, of the chaplains on the post, we were excused from our regular Army duties to attend those services.

Isaac Sankary, a member of the synagogue, invited me to participate in the Yom Kippur break-the-fast at his home. I learned that Sankary was of Syrian descent, that his wife was Polish and that they had nine children. Once I was seated at the table, I realized that my hosts might have had motives other than simple hospitality to a lonely Jewish GI far from home. Joining us at the table were the Sankarys' two young unmarried daughters, sloe-eyed beauties with coal-black hair and figures that are sometimes described as "pleasingly plump" or, in Yiddish, "*zäftig*" (juicy). From my perspective, they were simply overweight. It must have been

difficult for these parents, washed up by some vagrant tide in Fort Worth, to find appropriate Jewish spouses for their marriage-age daughters. The family made a great fuss over me and did everything they could do to get me interested in one or the other of the two young women, but no sparks flew. I thanked them profusely for their generous hospitality, but did not return.

One of the highlights of my stay at Camp Wolters was the *brit milah* that was conducted for the Smiths' new baby boy, their third. The *brit* was conducted at the hospital in the presence of as many Jews as I could muster for the event. Also present were numerous non-Jewish doctors who were interested in the surgical aspects of the rite, the Protestant and Catholic chaplains and, of course, the *mohel*. It hadn't been easy to find one. The first call had been to a *mohel* in Fort Worth, but he was otherwise occupied. A Jewish doctor at Carswell Air Force Base in Fort Worth declined, saying he did not feel qualified. Finally, Captain Smith found a *mohel* in Dallas, and, on Chaplain Hopkins' orders, he was flown in that morning on an Army plane. The *mohel* carefully explained the ritual and each step of the procedure to the gentiles in the room. When the ceremony was over, we repaired to the private dining room at the hospital. So, that day, in Mineral Wells, Texas, the back of the beyond, nowheresville, we ate pastrami, tongue and chopped liver sandwiches, as we would have on Houston Street in New York's Lower East Side, all courtesy of a delicatessen in Fort Worth.

Unlike Fort Jackson, there were no degrading or mind-numbing duties to perform at Camp Wolters, such as KP or grounds maintenance. Civilian employees on the post took care of these functions. I volunteered enthusiastically for one chore: to serve as a member of the three-man Army honor guard which attended funerals of ex-soldiers at cemeteries in Mineral Wells and the surrounding towns. It was our role to stand at attention at the gravesite during the interment ceremony, then fire three volleys into the air, fold the flag in the prescribed manner, corner over corner, and present the folded flag to the widow. I pulled this duty frequently during my tour at Wolters. It used to depress me that, with one or two exceptions, the relatives showed no grief, no tears, no muffled sobs, no show of emotion whatsoever. I had the impression that the family was relieved that the old buzzard had finally made his exit.

With my weekends free from Friday afternoon on, I had ample leisure time. When I chose to remain in Mineral Wells, I could socialize at the Moose Lodge in town. As an Englishman might become a “regular” at the local pub, I had become a member of the Loyal Order of the Moose for convivial drinking and socializing with friends. To circumvent state liquor laws, we bought bottles at the state liquor stores, kept them in small lockers assigned to us at the Moose Lodge and had the club’s bartender pour us drinks from our own bottles.

In warm weather, I sometimes drove with Father Belanger to Possum Kingdom Lake, a man-made lake 45 minutes north of Mineral Wells, where Wolters personnel had swimming, boating and fishing privileges. Father Belanger was a peach of a guy, short and slight, sandy-haired, his face perpetually set in a beatific smile. He was an ardent softball player and fisherman, and, as I have already said, a strong supporter of my “mission” at the post. Had I not been a committed Jew, I might have been drawn to his faith by the fine example that he set.

If I chose to travel further, Fort Worth was but an hour away, Dallas two hours away. Or we could travel a still greater distance, as we did on a weekend in November 1957. One of the regular army sergeants invited me along on a trip “south of the border, down Mexico way.” This meant a five-hour drive, with other GIs, through the wilderness of south central Texas. In a letter home, I described our journey blandly as a sightseeing trip into the Mexican interior. Our true destination, though, was Ciudad Acuña,<sup>223</sup> just across the Rio Grande from Del Rio, Texas. Ciudad Acuña had everything that a border town was supposed to have, in its so-called “Boys’ Town” area: whiskey and tequila served in an endless array of bars, great mariachi music and, most important, dozens of attractive women. They spoke and understood only the barest minimum of English but that was enough to get across what we wanted from them and what they were willing, at a price, to provide. That night, I went from one woman to another in a tequila fog.

At first light of dawn, the five of us, now flat broke and still feeling the effects of those tequila shots, left behind the bright lights and attractions of “Boys’ Town” and headed south into the desolate hill country in the Mexican interior, in the State of Coahuila. After that brief detour, we headed north again for the long ride back to

Mineral Wells. I returned to the post exhausted but exhilarated, still savoring the heady memories of that non-stop evening.

On other weekends off-post we drove into Dallas. One such visit was to the Texas State Fair at the fairgrounds south of the city, the largest state fair in the country. On still another weekend in Dallas, I heard music coming from a nondescript bar, its interior so dark and cloudy with cigarette smoke that you could not see the customers' faces. Attracted as always to the louche, the offbeat and the mysterious, I entered. The sound of music to an insistent rock-a-billy beat came from the backroom beyond the bar. Drawn to the music, as I had been drawn to the music in that Burlington, North Carolina dance hall during basic training, I passed through the bar to the backroom, found an empty chair and sat down. The room was dark and smoky, the dance-floor closely-packed with couples jivin' to the music. Once my eyes grew accustomed to the dim light, I saw that the dancers were all women, and immediately realized that this was a lesbian bar. No one had to prompt me to leave; I hurried out, noticing as I left the sign posted in the entryway that I had missed on the way in: the bar was off-limits to servicemen. I breathed a sigh of relief that the military police had not come in to check ID's while I was there. As a young man with a military buzzcut, I would have been conspicuous as a GI even in my civvies.

My preferred weekend destination, though, was to be Denton, a small city a half hour's drive north of Fort Worth, home to two units of the Texas university system: North Texas State College and Texas Women's University (TWU). The latter had until the previous year been the Texas State College for Women (TSCW); it claims the distinction of being the first women's college in the nation to obtain university status. In its earlier incarnation, the college had proudly proclaimed that the initials TSCW stood for "Texas's Sweetest Collection of Women." That label was confirmed for me at my first visit to TWU for a college-sponsored mixer. I was bowled over by the number of beautiful girls in the room who were open to meeting young men like me.

At that mixer, I met a sophomore, Harriet, who was to give a richer texture to the remaining months of my Army life. Harriet was from Orange, Texas, a petrochemical center just west of the Louisiana border on the Texas Gulf Coast. Plump, with light brown hair worn straight to her shoulders, blue eyes, thin lips with a slight overbite, she had an open guileless face which drew me as soon as I

first saw her, standing with two of her roommates in a corner of the dance floor. Her father managed a refinery for one of the major oil companies. As a corporate executive's daughter, Harriet had led a vagabond childhood; she was not the Southern belle that so many of the other TWU students were.

After we met, I spent almost every weekend at the college, confirming me in my feeling that my Army tour was but a continuation of college life. Having no car, I depended on a fellow GI for transportation. Fortunately, he was going steady with another TWU student, so that was not a problem. On weekends when he had other plans, I hitchhiked to Denton without difficulty. The college went out of its way to be helpful to the men who were dating its students, setting aside *Sin Cuidado* (Without Care), a large Victorian house on the campus, as a "weekend dorm" at \$3.00 per night. *Sin Cuidado* became my second home.

With Harriet I led the active social life I had not had at Cornell, with a girl I cared for, not enough to marry, but still enjoying her company and she mine. That was what it was all about, as she made clear early on: to have fun, to enjoy life together, without either of us having a claim on the other, knowing that this fling probably wouldn't go anywhere. Living for the moment was quite enough for both of us. We walked the campus together, went out for dinner on Saturday nights and attended football games at neighboring North Texas State. In December 1958, Harriet and I attended the Christmas prom at TWU, I wearing a rented tuxedo, she the bouffant off-the-shoulder gown that was the fashion in those days. On the way back from our Saturday night dates, we smooched in the backseat of the car, while my Army buddy and his girlfriend did likewise in the front. They never complained about the lack of privacy, nor did Harriet, and if it was not a problem for them, it wasn't for me.

When my tour of duty was drawing to an end, I told Harriet, and she understood that this would probably mean the end of our time together. For a final blast before we said goodbye, she invited me to spend the 1959 New Year's holiday with her at her home in Orange and to enjoy the New Year's Eve festivities with her family at their country club. The setting seemed to me oh-so-WASP-y, but I thoroughly enjoyed it—the silly stuff, wearing pointy hats, tooting horns, dancing to the live music, and welcoming in the new year by

drinking champagne from fluted glasses, my arms entwined in Harriet's.

At that New Year's Eve celebration with Harriet, the concluding words of "Auld Lang Syne" had a special resonance for me: "We'll sip a cup of kindness yet for days of auld lang syne." The next day, Harriet and I said our goodbyes, knowing, without saying so, that we would not see each other again. No matter, we had our memories of the good times we had had together. There was no sadness, no regrets in our parting.

Well before that New Year's Eve's celebration, I had begun to give serious thought to the path I was to take in life. The fun and games were over; I had to continue down life's highway in a purposeful manner, but it remained to decide which of several roads to take. I had the right under federal law to return to my position at BNA, but I never considered that possibility. My experience at BNA had confirmed for me that labor relations, my field of study in college, was not to be my life's work. A practitioner in that profession must take a stand: to come down on labor's side or on management's. It would be most unusual for a person who has chosen labor relations as a career to move back and forth between jobs with labor unions and jobs with corporations. In four years at the ILR School I had seen that neither labor nor management was without fault in their seemingly unending struggle. I could not be a passionate partisan for either side.

Sensing that my education was still incomplete and taking stock of my strengths and interests, I decided to apply to law school. That had been one of the vocations that the testing center at Cornell had recommended five years earlier. I knew also that the education I had received at the ILR School at Cornell served as excellent preparation for law school. It had been a continuing source of distress to the school's administrators that, having received a tuition-free education at Cornell, so many of its graduates went on to law school instead of going into the profession for which the school had trained them.

I applied to only two law schools: the University of Chicago and George Washington University, the first because it struck me as a place where I would obtain a fine legal education, and the second because Washington was the city I knew best, after New York, and still had a fondness for. I would need financial aid at both schools, and applied for it. In November 1958, both schools responded with

acceptance letters. Now I came to another fork in life's path: at which of the two ought I to enroll?

Although the decision was made with some reluctance, it was not a difficult one. The Army's "early-out" policy released servicemen from active duty up to three months before the expiration of their tour to attend college or graduate school. At the University of Chicago, I could matriculate only in September 1959; entering students could not begin in mid-year. That meant that I could not avail myself of the "early out"; I would have to serve out my two years in the Army, until April 1959. In November 1958, when this choice confronted me, I already had what the Army called the "short-timers' itch," the urge to get out as soon as possible. To stay in beyond January 1959 would have been intolerable. At George Washington, I could begin in the spring term and take advantage of the "early-out" policy. Moreover, the generous scholarship that the University of Chicago offered me carried with it a "moral obligation to repay," but George Washington's scholarship offer came with no such strings attached. Impatient to leave the Army as soon as possible and get on with my life, and unwilling to accept the burden of that "moral obligation to repay," I chose GW over Chicago.

Had I chosen Chicago instead, I would have endured three more months in the Army, but I would have chosen the better law school. At the time, I rationalized my choice by reasoning that George Washington, while not yet a top-flight law school, might eventually become one, and that I would benefit from that subsequent climb in rank, the way someone buys a stock at a bargain price and watches it become a gilt-edge security. At the University of Chicago, I might have followed a more traditional track in the legal profession and not gravitated toward housing as a specialty. Most important, even if I had returned to Washington after law school, I likely would not have met Ruthie, the woman who was to become my wife, there in 1963.

If someone had wagged his finger in my face and warned me in November 1958 that my entire life path hinged on the choice that faced me at that time, I might well have been frozen into immobility. But, presented with the information I had, I acted on it and, more important, on my gut instincts, as we all do in making decisions of that magnitude.

My "early-out" approved, I left Camp Wolters on January 14, 1959, in my pocket a discharge certificate and a farewell letter from Colonel Inskeep, acknowledging my contribution to Camp Wolters and the U.S. Army:

*In some of the tasks that must be performed [such as being a reporter for the post newspaper] it is difficult to see the direct relationship between the successful performance of that task and the ultimate goal of safeguarding the free world from the encroachments of totalitarianism. Nevertheless, I cannot emphasize too strongly that every job in the Army is a link forging a chain that will keep America free and secure.*

That letter assured me that my 21 months of Army duty in the back-of-the-beyond had not been in vain. I had done my duty to protect America from the Red Menace! Now, though, I was the proverbial young man in a hurry, eager to resume civilian life and begin my law school studies.

I have never regretted the nearly two years that I spent on active duty in the Army. If anything, I reflected in hindsight, I could have used what the Army gave me to greater advantage had I gone in immediately after graduating from college. The Army offered me many benefits in the way of physical conditioning, in exposing me to men of many backgrounds and in giving me responsibilities that changed me from an awkward college kid to the man I wanted to be. The toughening-up process was more than just physical. Through my military experience in an all-male environment, I absorbed a healthy level of machismo, a way of looking at the world that transformed me from the one-dimensional narrowly-focused intellectual that I might otherwise have become. Now, some fifty-five years after my military service, I am proud to call myself a veteran, and to be acknowledged as such.

## LAW SCHOOL

The five years after my return to Washington in January 1959 were crammed with milestones. In that half-decade, I earned my law degree and started out in my profession. I met and fell in love with the woman who was to become my wife. Doing well in law school, managing with very little money, and my often-chaotic relationships with women—these were my ongoing concerns in those years.

When I came back to Washington for my first semester of law school, I found a city not much changed from the one I had left twenty-one months earlier. Dwight D. Eisenhower, now in the seventh year of his eight-year presidency, occupied the White House. Four blocks west of the White House lay Stockton Hall, home of the George Washington University Law School.

Down the street from the Law School, at the corner of 20th and G Streets, was the Washington College of Law, the law school of American University. The original YMCA building stood at 18th and G Streets; there was a George Washington University dormitory at the southwest corner of 19th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were each housed in just one building between 17th and 19th Streets.

With the exception of its institutional buildings and churches, Foggy Bottom was a neighborhood of rowhouses, large and small, pinched together like teeth crowded into a too-small mouth. At the end of Virginia Avenue, hard by Rock Creek Parkway, was the Heurich Brewery, first home to Arena Stage, and the Watergate Inn, a riverfront restaurant. The Howard Johnson Motor Inn, which was

to become notorious thirteen years later in connection with the Watergate break-in, stood then, as it does today, at Virginia Avenue and 25th Street; now it's a George Washington University residence hall.

Fresh out of the Army in early 1959, my first lodgings were not near the law school but in Washington's Chevy Chase neighborhood, at 3728 Legation Street, N.W. A family from Lafayette, Louisiana had leased this large red-brick house while the husband was assigned to temporary duty in Washington. He had brought with him to Washington his wife, their 13-year-old daughter and two pug dogs; an older daughter was away at college. The family was very kind to me, inviting me frequently to share its dinner table. But I felt that I was too far removed from the law school atmosphere and wanted to live nearer the school, so at the end of the spring semester I gave notice that I would be leaving.

In the fall of 1959, I joined another law student to lease an apartment at 1917 G Street, N.W., one of a row of identical buildings just a half-block from the law school. The house and its neighbors have since been torn down to make room for one of the newer buildings of the International Monetary Fund. A third roommate, David Z. Webster, soon joined us. Fresh out of the Army, as I was, he had come to Washington to work at the Travelers Insurance Co., then on I Street N.W., and was seeking a place to live. While walking down G Street, he passed our building and struck up a conversation with my roommate. Before the day was out he had made up his mind to move in with us. Later, under our influence, David also decided to enroll in law school, although that had not been his intention in moving to Washington. We became close friends; I was a member of his wedding party when he married Janie Huntley in 1963.

When David moved out of our apartment in June 1961 to join another group of men in a Georgetown house, I moved directly across the street to an apartment at 1916 G Street N.W. I would continue to live there for the remainder of my law school years and for a year thereafter as well. That house, adjacent to the Evangelical and Reformed Church at the corner of 20th and G Street, was the mirror-image of the house I had just moved from: a four-story brown brick rowhouse with wooden screened-in sleeping porches in the rear. The church still stands, but the house was demolished to make way for still another International Monetary Fund building.

WHERE WAS I WHEN, Part I: I was living in that building at 1916 G Street on January 20, 1961, a memorably cold winter day, the day that John F. Kennedy was inaugurated as our 35th president. Through the around-the-clock efforts of an army of snowplow operators and hand-shovelers, the snow that had fallen the previous day had been cleared from Pennsylvania Avenue and was now piled high atop the curbs. On Inauguration Day, I stood with other spectators on one of those snowbanks along the Avenue, trying to keep my back to the icy winds that swept across the open spaces. Defying the cold, the newly-inaugurated president walked the last few blocks to the White House, to the consternation of his Secret Service detail. For my part, numbed by the cold, I nevertheless exulted in the inauguration of a Democratic president and rejoiced that the torpor of the last eight years was at an end.

WHERE WAS I WHEN, Part II: Twenty-two months later, I was still living on G Street during the now-famous “Thirteen Days in October,” the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962. Now, more than fifty years later and with the Cold War fading into distant memory, it is difficult to recapture the tension, the edge that prevailed during those thirteen days. It affected me directly, imbued as I was with the cold war sense of personal peril. Living only four blocks from the White House, I believed myself to be at ground zero if a nuclear war were to break out. I pictured the Soviet missiles hurtling toward the White House, hurling me and millions of others into oblivion. For those thirteen days, it was difficult to stay focused on the daily routine; thoughts of imminent annihilation kept intruding on my everyday life. The nation breathed a collective sigh of relief when the Soviet missile cruisers changed course and headed for home. My relief was personal and palpable.

My first semester of Law School was devoted entirely to the required courses that all first-year law students endure: Contracts, Torts, Legal Method, Criminal Law. It became clear to me after attending only a few weeks of classes that, with a few exceptions, the Law School faculty was a collection of has-beens nearing retirement and newcomers fresh from the practice of law, trying out teaching as an alternative to a career at a law firm.

Among those on the downhill slope of their teaching careers was James Fryer, who taught Evidence. He had apparently taught the same course for years because the entire course was outlined in meticulously scripted index cards. These he would hold in two hands as he sat at the desk in front of the class, and flip them down as he finished the material on each card. It was easy to conclude that he would have been helpless without those index cards and that, moreover, he had probably not added a new case to his lectures in twenty years or more. For Professor Fryer as for other evidence teachers at that time, Harvard University law professor John Henry Wigmore was the guru and his *Wigmore on Evidence*, first published in 1920, was Scripture. If Wigmore said it, it was true; conversely, any principle adopted since then was no more than a gloss on what Wigmore had written.

Another old-timer at the Law School was J. Forrester Davison, who taught Administrative Law. A handsome man in late middle-age, he bore a strong resemblance, with his jutting jaw, steel-gray hair and rimless glasses, to Franklin D. Roosevelt. All that was lacking was the long cigarette holder at the corner of his mouth to make the resemblance complete. His course featured the many decisions involving the rights of individual citizens trampled in the name of the so-called national interest, an area of the law that remains of pressing importance today, five decades later. After discussing each such case, documenting anew another intolerable incursion into individual civil liberties, Professor Davison would say with exasperation in his voice (this was in late 1959): "Big Brother is watching you! We don't have to wait until 1984 [a reference to George Orwell's book of that name]; 1984 is here!" I can well imagine his outraged response to the infringements on our civil liberties that we are witnessing today.

From Professor William T. Mallison I took a course in public international law. I signed up for the course with some trepidation, because Professor Mallison was one of the leading Arab apologists then on the scene. On every public issue on which Israelis were arrayed on one side and the Arab world on the other, you could count on Professor Mallison to weigh in with a pronouncement or a letter to the editor supporting the Arab position. In these public forums, he naturally spoke with greater authority precisely because he was a leading figure in international law and because he was not himself an Arab. But I remember evaluating his statements in class

much more skeptically than I would otherwise, scrutinizing everything he said for a possible anti-Israel tinge.

Leroy Merrifield, the faculty expert on labor law, had written the casebook that was assigned reading in his course. Soft-spoken and slight of build, he took an essentially boring subject and, if it were possible, made it even more boring by his pedestrian lectures. I had assumed on entering law school that I would combine my law degree with my undergraduate training and specialize in labor law. After taking that course, I realized that labor law held no interest for me as a life's work. With a law degree, I would be qualified for almost any legal specialty.

John P. McAvoy was a newcomer to law school teaching, fresh from a stint at White & Case, the Wall Street law firm. He taught Corporations and Personal Property, the law of bailments, pledges and surety. The trial that I had sat in on with my sixth grade class from P.S. 152, the case of the woman who had lost her expensive fur coat at a restaurant checkroom—that was a bailments case. When I attended law school, Personal Property was a required course for first-year students. Perhaps no one would have taken it otherwise. Today, far from being required, it is not even offered as a separate course. I avoided taking it in the first year and in my second year as well. When, in the final semester of my third year, I sought a waiver, the powers-that-be insisted that I take the course. I found myself, a third-year student and an editor of the law review, in Professor McAvoy's classroom with fifteen other students, all first-years. McAvoy said to me, "I'm not going to let you off the hook so easily. You're going to help me teach this course." He turned four or five of the lectures over to me, and, standing in front of that class, I got a taste of law school teaching. While I spoke, Professor McAvoy sat among the other students, ready to answer any of the students' questions that I could not field, and there were many of those.

One of the few capable professors on the law school faculty was our first year contracts professor, Monroe H. Freedman. A Harvard Law School graduate, he cut quite a figure in his expensively-tailored dark blue pin-stripe suits, a gold watch fob stretched across his vest, and his brown hair in leonine curls atop a large head. He was demanding of the students, which was all to the good, and skilled in using the Socratic discourse method perfected by Professor C. C. Langdell decades earlier at Harvard. His contracts

course was given in the main lecture hall at Stockton, with perhaps 200 students in attendance. One morning, he began the lecture by firing a series of questions at the students, challenging them to defend their views on the cases which he had assigned as reading at the end of the last class. When none of the students responded, he dramatically closed his casebook, gathered his notes and strode out of the class, informing us that he would return when we were better prepared.

Professor Freedman did not remain long at GW. Perhaps his arrogance and superciliousness did not endear him to his fellow faculty members. He moved on to Hofstra Law School on Long Island and established himself there as one of the nation's leading authorities on legal ethics and later as its dean.

Another notable exception to the general run of mediocrity was David Seidelson, who, when I arrived at the law school, had also just arrived from the private practice of law in Pittsburgh. He taught us Conflicts of Laws, making an intellectually stimulating exercise of it. Most practicing lawyers will never encounter a conflicts-of-laws question in their entire career. Professor Seidelson spent hours explaining such abstruse concepts as *renvoi*, drawing elaborate diagrams on the board to show how a court in State B might apply its own conflicts-of-laws rules to send the case back to State A, which might or might not assume jurisdiction based on its own conflicts principles. I enjoyed these exercises, while realizing that these issues hardly ever arise in the practice of law.

I also respected Professor Herman I. Orentlicher, then in his 40's. His specialty was the Uniform Commercial Code (UCC), including the law of negotiable instruments. I had no interest in commercial law, signing up for the course only because I needed the three credit hours to complete my schedule for that semester and because it was offered at a convenient hour. Yet here, too, Professor Orentlicher's enthusiasm for his subject matter won me over. He took the greatest pleasure in demonstrating how the UCC was a seamless web, how one provision of the Code, if read together with two or three other such provisions, could lead to the desired result.

The George Washington Law School had then, and has today, a very large enrollment. By far the majority of the students were enrolled in the evening session, since they had fulltime jobs during the day. For them, the normal three-year program stretched an

additional year. Far fewer students were enrolled, as I was, in the day session. Some of the law school courses were offered both during the day and in the evenings, but some were offered only in the evenings. Consequently, although I was nominally enrolled in the day session, I had to return to the school at night for many of my courses.

In the early 1960's, the Law School was known for its emphasis on patent and trademark law; perhaps it is still so today. Many of the evening-session students worked during the day as patent examiners at the U.S. Patent Office. As undergraduates, they had been engineering students. It was their goal, after earning their degree as lawyers and being admitted to the bar, to join law firms specializing in intellectual property law: patents, trademarks and copyrights. Many of the day students, too, held part-time jobs to make ends meet. A particularly desirable job was that of elevator operator on Capitol Hill. You could run the elevator with a casebook in your lap and study while earning money. The student who had that assignment undoubtedly had parents or well-placed friends who had political clout with a Congressman or a senator.

Before entering law school, I had pictured intense and stimulating discussions with professors after class and long informal bull sessions at which law students would discuss with animation the cases they had read and would have to present in class the following day. There was none of that. When each class ended, the professors rushed out of the lecture hall to attend to their own concerns. The students likewise rushed out as soon as the last morning class ended to grab a quick lunch before heading for their jobs downtown. I was among those who bolted away to get to my part-time job. After work, there was only time to eat and do the required reading in the casebooks before going to bed. Many were the evenings when I would fall asleep on the living room couch with my face in the open casebook.

In my first part-time job, during the spring of 1959, I worked as a proofreader for the *Journal of the American Geophysical Union* (AGU), then housed in the triangle bounded by Massachusetts Avenue, M Street and 15th Street N.W. I had no great interest in the subject matter of the articles submitted to the *Journal*. Nevertheless, I found that, through reading and editing them, I was pushing back the boundaries of my ignorance, becoming aware of

magma, the fiery material at the Earth's molten core, and such then-novel theories as plate tectonics.

At the AGU I became enamored of Patricia, a girl a few years younger than I who worked there with me. When I first met her, she wore her long chestnut-brown hair pulled back severely in a tight ponytail. One day she came to work with her hair falling loose down to her shoulders. Later, she would accuse me, half in jest, of having been drawn to her only after she had let her hair down. I admitted that that might be true. We dated intensely for a period of six months or so. In those days, before air-conditioning came into widespread use, Pat and I spent many a warm summer evening in close communion on what was known locally as the "P Street Beach," the greensward that stretches uphill from Rock Creek Parkway to 22d Street, just south of the P Street Bridge. At that time, it was a favorite trysting place for straight couples; now, I'm told, that patch of green is the preserve of gay men.

Echoing previous experiences with Iris in Charles City, Virginia and with Harriet in Orange, Texas, I spent a weekend with Pat and her family at her home in Jamesport, New York, on Long Island's North Fork. Then came the day when Pat and I headed for Penn Station in New York City, where she was to board a train out to the Island. On the train platform, I gave Pat a warm hug, accompanied by words of affection. With that embrace went the unspoken words, "Thanks for all the good times." Each of us knew, without saying so, that this would be goodbye, and indeed it was.

The next relationship was like a defective rocket that starts promisingly, then gyrates weakly and lands but a short distance from the starting point. Dale Carlisle, a law school classmate of mine, was going steady with a Jewish coed at the University of Maryland, a member of the Sigma Delta Tau sorority there. In late spring 1959, he asked me to take out Susie, a sorority sister of his "steady," so that we could double-date. Over the span of several dates, Susie grew interested in me as a prospective husband. Indeed, there were times when I had to ask myself whether I had yet proposed to her. I knew that I hadn't, but Susie's plans for the two of us made it seem that that threshold had already been crossed. I felt the jaws of the tender trap locking about my ankles. Unfortunately, I was not drawn to Susie as she was to me, did not feel for her the ardent passion that is the cornerstone of love.

My time with Susie did serve one useful purpose: an afternoon car-ride with her convinced me that it was high time, at age 25, to learn how to drive and to buy a car. We were at her home in Baltimore and needed a car for an errand. Borrowing her mother's DeSoto, we drove off, I at the wheel, without a driver's license. It was afternoon rush hour on Reisterstown Road; cars were whizzing by us on both sides. I didn't even know then what the dotted-line lane markers were for. Were you supposed to drive between the lines or center the car on them? Faced with those alternatives, I chose the latter, as cars swerved to avoid me. Susie must have thought to herself, "What is it with this guy?" To make matters worse, the entire time that we were driving I had the emergency brake on. Cars in those years did not have a dashboard light to warn you to release the brake. The smell of acrid rubber soon filled the car, but we could not trace it until we had come back to the house and I saw that the brake was on. Yes, it was long past time for me to take driving lessons, get a driver's license and buy a car. In May 1959, I finally passed the driving test, obtained my driver's license and straight away bought my first car, a 1954 two-toned blue-and-cream Chevy. It was to serve me well for the next five years.

After three months of dating, it became clear that my relationship with Susie was over. I have forgotten what triggered the crisis, but a tense silence prevailed as we drove back to the sorority house to get her home before her curfew. Clearly depressed at the turn of events, Susie was the picture of gloom as she slouched ever lower in the backseat next to me, her features arranged in a black scowl. Perhaps she was even then framing in her mind the "Dear John" letter she would write me as soon as she got back to her room, and she did just that.. Three days later, returning from law school to the house on Legation Street, I sifted through the day's mail and found a postcard from Susie, written in a tiny, dense hand. She had much to say, and would say it all on one side of the postcard. After reading the first few words, I got the drift of it, and read no further. "Dear Dan . . . ," it began. I was to be the spurned suitor. Far from feeling rejected, my reaction was one of great relief that the relationship was over, and that it was she and not I who had ended it. My one regret at the outcome was that I would no longer see Susie's parents. They were intelligent people who were a pleasure to spend time with and they appeared to enjoy my company as well.

In the summer of 1959, unable to get a seasonal job that would end when school resumed in September, I decided that I would have to hold myself out as available for a year-round position. From the classified ads in the *Washington Post*, I found a job as an editorial writer for the American Trucking Association, with offices at that time on P Street N.W., just west of 16th Street. Unaware of my intention to return to school in the fall, the ATA hired me as a staff writer for its magazine at \$90 per week. I was somewhat familiar with the issues that were important to the trucking industry because I had written a term paper for Professor Goodstein's economics course at Cornell on the decades-long battle between the trucking industry and the railroads. The railroads, through their trade association, the Association of American Railroads, kept up a drumbeat of complaints in those years that the federal government subsidized the trucking industry by maintaining its right-of-way, the highways, while the railroads received no federal subsidy to maintain their right-of-way, the railroad trackbeds. As the trucking industry's lobbyist on Capitol Hill, the ATA's job was to counter those attacks from the railroads. It has done that successfully over the years.

When the school year began in September 1959, I delayed my departure from ATA, hoping to make it seem that my leaving was unrelated to my return to school. I continued working full-time, and finally gave notice only in mid-October, several weeks after the school year had begun. It required several weeks of hard reading to catch up on the material that had been covered in my courses while I was still working at ATA.

That same summer, too, I was but a step away from being homeless. I had moved out of the house on Legation Street at the end of the spring term, and could not afford to pay rent anywhere else. In the George Washington University residence hall which stood then at the corner of 19th and H Street N.W., a few of the rooms were occupied by students enrolled in summer courses, but most of the rooms remained empty. There was no front-door security; one could enter and leave at will. Without informing the housing office or the resident manager, I chose one such unoccupied room as mine for the summer. Each morning before heading for work, I stowed my clothes and my bedsheets in that part of the closet that was not exposed when the sliding doors were opened and rolled up my mattress toward the foot of the bed,

leaving the bedsprings exposed, as in the other unoccupied rooms. On returning to the room at night, I reversed the process, but I could not use the room for studying; I had to stay out until late in the evening and come back at 10:00 p.m. Those were nerve-wracking weeks, living always with the fear of discovery. Looking back, I am convinced that my unauthorized presence was no secret to the other students living there, but neither they nor the staff ever called me out on it, and I was able to stay in the dorm the entire summer without paying rent and without other consequences.

On the strength of a law review note I had written on an immigration case, I was elected an associate editor of the *Law Review* in spring 1960. The newly-elected editorial board decided to put out a special issue the following fall to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). With that in mind, I wrote a letter to the chairman of the Board, Boyd Leedom, explaining that I wished to work at the Board that summer to prepare myself to edit that commemorative issue of the law review. My letter must have been favorably received, because Judge Leedom arranged to have me work at the NLRB's Public Information Office (PIO).

It was the responsibility of the PIO to prepare news releases announcing and explaining the decisions of the Board. In the typical case, the Board was asked to rule on an employee's discharge. Was the man fired because he was incompetent, as the employer claimed, or because he was a union activist, as the union claimed? For me, that seemed a very small pond to swim in, confirming me in my decision not to specialize in labor law after law school.

Fortunately, within a few weeks after my arrival at the Board, Judge Leedom rescued me from the ennui of my assignments at the PIO. An Eisenhower appointee to the Board, Leedom had been a state court judge in his native South Dakota at the time of his appointment. One morning, after reporting for work as usual, I was instructed to go straight down to Judge Leedom's office. This burly, genial, homespun man put me immediately at ease, telling me that the governor of the state had appointed a commission to mark the centennial of the Dakota Territory. The task of the Commission was to prepare a social studies textbook that was to be used in South Dakota's high schools. The Commission had asked Judge Leedom to contribute a chapter to that textbook, to be entitled

“Justice—Territorial Style.” Would I be interested, Judge Leedom asked, in helping him with the research and writing of that chapter? Would I! I jumped at the chance, although it had nothing to do with my reason for signing on to work at the Board. So ended my drudgework writing press releases for the PIO.

For the rest of the summer I spent my days in the reading room of the Library of Congress, immersing myself in the history of the Dakota Territory. I learned of the outlaws who infested the Badlands and how they came to an end in a hail of bullets or by the hangman’s noose, of Buffalo Bill, Wild Bill Hickok and Calamity Jane and the early efforts to bring the rule of law to a place where there had been no law other than rough frontier justice. After completing the research, I wrote up the chapter and gave it to Judge Leedom. The chapter as it finally appeared in the textbook was almost identical to what I had written. Yet, as a professor’s name will appear as the author of an article in a learned journal although a graduate student has done much of the research and writing, so Judge Leedom’s name was on the chapter as its author because his was the recognizable name in South Dakota. My name appeared only among the acknowledgments. But even today, when I hold in my hands the published book, *Dakota Panorama*, I still feel a pride of authorship and look back with pleasure on my research and writing for Judge Leedom.

Meanwhile, my days as a bachelor in Washington continued to be marked by the women who entered and passed through, as in a Shakespeare play. They entered, stage right and stage left, exited stage left and stage right; and, finally, *exeunt omnes*. Years later, I find myself remembering the low points and the “near misses” in the lists of love, more so than the so-called “triumphs.”

One such lost opportunity occurred at 1917 G Street, my first G Street address. My roommates and I lived on the third floor. Maggie, a single girl in her early 20’s, lived in the apartment directly below ours. Maggie was an Irish-American colleen, with curly black hair, flashing dark brown eyes and heavy black eyebrows, skin lightly freckled, and thick rimless glasses. The lines of her body were straight and angular, not curved, and she hid them in loose-fitting clothes, like a convent novice. She had a lively personality but physically she did not attract me.

Then, within a few weeks after I moved in, Maggie’s younger sister, Linda, came down to join her in the apartment. The contrast

between the two sisters was startling. Linda had shoulder-length light-brown hair, blue eyes, a well-proportioned figure and a manner that suggested that she was used to attracting men and having them fall passionately in love with her. At least that was my impression. I remember thinking to myself that God moves in mysterious ways, that these two girls, so very different in looks and personality, could emerge from the same womb. Once Linda arrived and the young men started hovering over her, Maggie went into a blue funk, as if this was something that she had already experienced many times in her life.

Although I was attracted to Linda, as everyone else was, I had a warm friendship with Maggie. We talked amicably whenever we met, in the building or out on the street. One afternoon, we bumped into each other at the street corner and walked home together. When we reached the second floor landing, she to open her apartment door, I to continue on up the stairs, she impulsively threw herself against me, pinned me up against the wall of the stairwell, and mashed her lips against mine. Maggie was the last person from whom I would have expected such passion. I was so startled, not accustomed to women being the aggressor in such situations, that I reacted oafishly and not as the smooth debonair Lothario I would like to have been. There were to be no more such demonstrations of emotion between us. At the end of the year I moved across the street and did not see Maggie again.

Another “near miss” occurred after I moved across the street from No. 1917 to No. 1916. In the new building, too, our apartment was on the third floor. And, just as across the street, two young single women attending summer classes at George Washington lived in the apartment below ours. One of them, Gisela, was German; the other, Marie-Veronique, French. On the day in question, Mother, visiting me for the weekend, was upstairs in my apartment. I went downstairs to borrow something and found Marie-Veronique there, by herself.. One thing led to another, as it often does when a young man finds himself alone with a young woman. Soon Marie-Veronique and I were entangled on the sofa together, the dalliance well underway, and she and I had started to ascend that familiar parabolic curve of crescendo, climax and diminuendo. Then the still small voice of duty whispered to me, “Hey, what do you think you’re doing? Mother is upstairs, expecting you, and she’s thinking, ‘Where could Danny be?’ and

she's getting concerned. Quit fooling around." I pulled away abruptly, bounded off the sofa and flew out the door to rejoin Mother upstairs, leaving Marie-Veronique on the sofa, forlorn, baffled and rightfully upset with me. There would be no second such opportunity with Marie-Veronique. Who could blame her?

Midway through my final year of law school, in the spring of 1961, I obtained a job through the Law School Placement Office in what was then known as the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, or HEW. Its offices were located on Third Street S.W., just south of Independence Avenue. Not long after I started working there, Dorothy, one of the career employees in the office, middle-aged with shoulder-length auburn hair and deep-blue eyes, approached me with a suggestive leer on her face. "Dan," she said, "We are bringing on a summer intern as a typist for our office. We could hire any of the girls that we interview, so I'm leaving the choice to you. You'll be able to see them from your desk. Just look at each of them as they come in and let me know afterwards what you think." In short, Dorothy was volunteering to be my procuress. Delighted at this unexpected good fortune and unaware of the consequences, I had not a moment's hesitation in accepting Dorothy's proposal.

That's how Donna entered my life, the third person to be interviewed that morning. Sitting in the adjoining office, at a distance of perhaps twenty feet from Dorothy's desk, I saw Donna first from the back, a tall girl wearing a pale blue-and-white checked shirtwaist dress cinched at the waist with a braided rope belt, her thick ash-blonde hair pulled back in a ponytail. Later, I would notice, close up, her wide expressive mouth and large eyes, the irises a light blue flecked with darker blue.

Donna may well have rued the day that she showed up for that interview. Looking back, I, too, might have wished that Dorothy had selected the summer intern herself and not left the choice to me. But when life presents an opportunity, more often than not you take it, heedless of the possible consequences. Rollo May said it eloquently:

*We may look at an autumn tree so beautiful in its brilliant colors that we feel like weeping; or we may hear music so lovely that we are overcome by sadness. The craven thought then creeps into our consciousness that maybe it*

*would have been better never to have seen that tree at all or not to have heard the music.*

*. . . But the essence of being human is that in the brief moment we exist on this spinning planet, we can love some persons and some things, in spite of the fact that time and death will ultimately claim us all.*<sup>224</sup>

A church bulletin board said it more plainly but no less eloquently:

*Don't cry that it's over; smile that it happened.*

At the end of the morning, I told Dorothy that I liked the girl in the blue-and-white checked dress. Giving me the salacious smirk that I had grown accustomed to, Dorothy hired her. Donna started work the following Monday, and was given a desk not too far from mine. The day we met, it was like the popular song of the 50's had it:

*I was walkin' along, mindin' my business,  
when out of an orange purple polka-dotted sky,  
Crash, bam, allagazam, wonderful you came by.*<sup>225</sup>

Donna was 17 at the time, having a few weeks earlier graduated from McLean High School and intending to go the University of Maryland in the fall. She had probably learned of the job opening through her father, a government attorney. From the start, I was captivated by her wacky temperament, her refreshing lack of inhibitions, her disregard for prevailing mores and her contempt for the rules of the game. When confronted by convention, Donna would toss her head impatiently, her thick blond hair swishing from side to side like a horse's mane in a gesture that meant, "That's a bunch of b.s. I don't want to hear it." Then, having successfully flouted convention or hearing of someone else who had done so, she would react with uncontrolled glee. I think of her now as the advance scouting party for the hedonistic hippie cohort that was to follow in the mid-60's.

It didn't take long for Donna and me to get to know each other real well. In her company I had the exhilarating feeling that I was "walking on the wild side" for the first time in my life. I was turned on by Donna's readiness for what she called "making it" at any time of day, in any setting—in the office, during lunch hour or after work

and in any number of romantic and not-so-romantic rendezvous around the Washington area.

We continued in our intense relationship well beyond the end of the summer. Our favorite hangout was The Cauldron, at 34th and M Streets in Georgetown. Georgetown in those days was not the Mecca for revelers and upscale shoppers that it is now; it had then more of a neighborhood feel to it. Instead of the nationwide chains, M Street and Wisconsin Avenue were lined with grocery stores, neighborhood bars, a movie theater, drug stores, smoke shops and the Woolworth's, serving the residents of that neighborhood. There were, to be sure, fine restaurants and other locales where students from Georgetown and George Washington and other young people came for a good time. The Cauldron was one such place. It served only tea, coffee and soft drinks, no liquor. You went there, as Donna and I did, because the Cauldron was riding the crest of the then-current wave of folk-song popularity, led by groups such as The Kingston Trio, The Limeliters, The Highwaymen and a young female solo singer then making a name for herself, Joan Baez. The Cauldron rarely attracted name acts. Its resident entertainer was Donald Leace, a young African-American whose repertory ran to songs like "The Banks of the O-HI-O," "The House of the Rising Sun," and "The Wreck of The Old 97." In my mind's ear, I hear him still, giving a blues-y rendition of the familiar folk song, "Old Blue":

*Had an old dog and his name was Blue*

*Betcha five dollars he's a good dog too.*

*Here, Blue, you good dog, you.*

Leace eventually became chairman of the theater studies department at the Duke Ellington High School for the Performing Arts, at 34th Street and Reservoir Road, not too far from where he entertained us some 50 years ago.<sup>226</sup>

On one weekend during that period, Mother came down from New York for a visit. The three of us, Mother, Donna and I, went to the Circle Theatre, a movie house then located at the northwest corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and 21st Street N.W. that specialized in foreign and repertory films. The film was "Khovantchina," a Russian cinematic treatment of the Mussorgsky opera. We sat in the darkened theatre, Mother on my left, Donna on my right, and all three of us tense and miserable. Mother had

always told me that “It doesn’t matter to me whom you marry as long as you love her and she loves you.” Even as she said it I took it with a grain of salt. It clearly mattered a great deal to her.

Calvin Trillin, a frequent contributor to the *New Yorker* magazine, had much the same experience as I in dealing with a mother’s outward indifference to her son’s choice of a spouse:

*From earliest childhood, I had heard my mother say that she would accept anyone I brought home [as a future bride] but it was always clear to me that she dreaded the thought of a non-Jewish daughter-in-law.<sup>227</sup>*

Occasionally, I would try to describe to Mother my feelings for one or another of the girls whom I was dating. Mother would maintain a diplomatic silence. She didn’t say “Yes,” she didn’t say “No.” She didn’t say “On the one hand . . . but, then, on the other.” When it came to my social life, she was a sounding board that absorbed what I was saying but did not reverberate. Perhaps she felt that any expression of her views in this area would be seen as unwelcome interference on her part. Perhaps, too, she was remembering her own teen years and young adulthood, when she had to put up with her mother’s searching cross-examinations in regard to the men she was seeing. She might have sworn even then that she would not pry into her children’s affairs as her mother had pried into hers and now she felt bound by that oath.

That evening at the Circle Theatre, I felt I could read Mother’s mind as the three of us, she and I and Donna, tried to focus on the film. I was sure she was thinking, “Who is this girl and what does Danny see in her? I wouldn’t want her as a daughter-in-law.” On the other side, Donna was equally miserable, most likely thinking to herself, “She hates me, she hates me. This will never work.” Although she was outwardly polite, Mother could not bring herself to be warm and embracing to Donna. If I had taxed her for it, she probably would have answered, “I can’t act what I don’t feel.”

After Donna, now 18, had completed her freshman year at the University of Maryland, we began to talk of marriage, more or less drifting into it. At that time, couples rarely took up living together until they were married. Certainly, we did not consider it, despite Donna’s disregard for appearances, but, looking to a possible future together, we had begun to look at vacant apartments.

We also made an appointment to meet with Rabbi Edwin Friedman of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Jewish Congregation. The

B-CCJC met at that time in what had been a private home at the corner of Bradley Boulevard and Wisconsin Avenue. The house was later demolished and a Montgomery County firehouse built on the site. Rabbi Friedman was known to be the only rabbi in the Washington area who was willing to perform mixed marriages without requiring the prior conversion of the non-Jewish partner. As Donna and I listened, he explained his requirements for presiding at interfaith marriages. While conversion was not a prerequisite to the wedding, both the man and the woman were expected to attend several weeks of instruction in Judaism in preparation for the ceremony. We left without committing ourselves to return for such instruction, and never came back.

I had mentioned to my family my thoughts about marrying Donna. At that point, one of the men in my family stepped forward as, under similar circumstances, cousin Frank Wolff had done some ten years earlier when I had broken up with Iris. On a weekend visit to New York, I had stopped in to see Grandmother at her apartment on Riverside Drive. My Uncle Ernie, then 42 years old and wasted with the kidney disease that was to take his life some months hence, was also there. Perhaps Mother had spoken to him of Donna, because he took me aside and said, in a tone more imploring than commanding, “Daniel, you can’t marry that girl. Think of your family, think of *die Kontinuität* [the tradition]. Please don’t turn your back on that.” He reminded me that no member of the Sachs family had ever married outside the Jewish faith.

Ernie’s pleas weighed heavily on me. I understood! Oh, how I understood! There was “them” and there was “us.” Donna was “them.” We could walk with them, work with them, be “best friends” with them, make love to them, hold the same values, too, but marriage, that was different. Marriage was a sacred bond, not only between man and woman, but also between the generations stretching back to Abraham and Sarah and, if we disciplined ourselves, forward to those as yet unborn. Had not Abraham, to prevent his son, Isaac, from marrying a Canaanite woman, ordered his manservant, Eliezer, to journey back to his homeland and clan to find there an appropriate bride for his son? Had not Sarah, after the birth of Isaac, expelled from her household her non-Jewish handmaiden, Hagar, and her newborn baby boy, Ishmael?

When Ernie spoke of *die Kontinuität*, of tradition, he was not speaking only of Donna and me, this Jew and this non-Jew. He

invoked “family” as if it were a magic incantation, a mantra, as indeed it was. He was speaking of those who first adopted our family name, whose fathers and mothers had died rather than renounce their faith, of the names stretching back two hundred years in the rectangular boxes in the family tree and, still more important, of those still to come, their names yet to fill the empty boxes on that tree. He called forth those myths that had been dinned into me from earliest childhood. To marry outside the faith was to turn my back on those myths, those family traditions and, finally, on my own identity. You could not, Ernie said, cast off that identity as easily as you might discard an old coat for a new one.

I bowed to Ernie’s good counsel, not bowing in the sense of submitting resentfully, against my will, but in the sense of recognizing the weight of his argument, the fundamental truth of what he was saying. I had confronted this challenge before in saying “No” to Iris. That was different; I was too young then to marry. Now, I was of marriage age. Had I been differently made, I might easily have married Donna, but it could not be. Remember the scene in Philip Roth’s novel, *The Human Stain*?<sup>228</sup> When Coleman Silk’s white girlfriend, Steena Palsson, visits with Coleman’s family in East Orange, she realizes for the first time that he and they are African-Americans. When they come back together to New York, she bolts out of the train and hurls at Coleman the parting words, “I can’t do this!” That’s just how I felt. Marrying Donna did not have to me the taste of a lifetime partnership built on a rock-solid foundation.

How often, here in America, have we read of someone describing herself by the different ethnic strains that fused in her, like streams flowing into a fast-flowing river? A man or woman may say, “I’m mostly English and Irish with some French and Latino and African-American and Cherokee thrown in,” taking pride in that exotic mixture. Not I, and not most Jews, which is perhaps why we have been accused of being “clannish,” inward-turning.

Above all else, I wanted to maintain the ties of blood and carry them forward to generations yet unborn, to keep my bonds with the family, and not to disappoint my kin or force them to adjust to someone from outside their tradition. It was all-important that I maintain my own identity and not veer off to become someone else, disconnected with my past and with my family.

Rollo May has said, more precisely and fluently than I could:

*Each of us was born into a certain family in a certain country in a certain historical moment, all with no choice on our part. If we try to deny these facts—like Jay Gatsby in Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby—we blind ourselves to reality and come to grief. True, we can surpass to some extent the limitations of our family backgrounds or our historical situation, but such transcendence can occur only to those who accept the fact of their limitation to begin with.*<sup>229</sup>

There was not in me, and never has been, the desire shared by so many Americans like the fictional Jay Gatsby for the total makeover, the reinvention.

*[To] that vexing American question: how do we cross over into this new, 'better' world; what loyalty do we owe to our old world, to that history—no matter how nightmarish—that informs our bones, flesh and souls?*<sup>230</sup>

their answer too often is that nothing of the past is of importance to them; indeed, they see it as a heavy yoke around their shoulders. I will not, they say, let the dead hand of previous generations control me, I will not be held in thrall to their outmoded values. These Americans, intent on reinvention, have equally little concern for what comes after them. Only my life, they say, those 80-odd years that are allotted to me, are of any importance. That frees me, they would add, to make the changes that I feel need to be made so that I can be the person I want to be. Troubled by a so-called "Jewish nose"? Modern plastic surgery can straighten or eliminate the offending hook. Feel straitjacketed by an obviously Jewish name? Change it, as James Gatz changed his Germanic-sounding name to the more elegant Gatsby and just as, in Herman Wouk's *Marjorie Morningstar*,<sup>231</sup> Marjorie's suitor, formerly Noah Ehrman, made himself over as Noel Airman. Americans, it has been said, "shed their pasts as instinctively as snakes molt their skins."<sup>232</sup>

*In our born-again, discard and replace culture, where conversation has replaced correction, fast transformation has become as easy for a self as fast food. It no longer seems to matter what you become in the process of transformation, just as long as you are transformed. And if you're still the same imperfect animal despite your funny new vocabulary, simply transform yourself again.*<sup>233</sup>

With its constitutionally-guaranteed freedom to practice religion, or not to, modern America also offers abundant opportunities for re-invention in that regard. If, as one born into a Jewish family, you see too much “other-ness” in your grandparents and parents, shake off the shackles of their orthodoxy, change to Conservative Judaism or Reconstructionism, or Reform. Reject God-centered Judaism entirely and turn to “humanistic Judaism” or Ethical Culture or cross the divide and become a Unitarian. To many Jews, the notion of God as a wrathful man seated on his celestial throne, passing judgment on us mortals, is absurd. They reject it altogether. If they need a substitute, their divinity is unemotional Objectivism, informed by up-to-the-minute scientific research. Accept nothing on faith, say those of this persuasion; adopt no principle that cannot be proven by the scientific method.

Reinvention, inward and outward, can be very tempting. It is liberating to owe nothing to the past, to achieve a place in this world entirely on one’s own merits, with no external forces to hold you back. For some persons, reinvention is more than tempting; it is essential, if they are to maintain their emotional well-being. For them, the past is poison, to be purged as one must use an emetic to purge poison from the system if one is to survive. No one can deny such persons their right to set a different course from the one dictated by the previous generation. Fortunately, I did not find it necessary to do so and could not bring myself to go off in a different direction. In the end, I remained true to the course set for me by birth and upbringing.

I was not always certain that I would remain true to my heritage. It took some years to become comfortable in my identity, but, at the end of the process, I rejected every temptation to re-invent myself and to discard what had been transmitted to me across the generations. There was nothing in my background, I concluded, that needed to be rejected or excised. My Jewishness was not a burden to be cast off. On the contrary, what had been handed to me across the generations, from across the ocean, I felt was of great value, and worthy of being passed on to succeeding generations. I felt a powerful calling, my mission in life, to carry on that tradition, and I was proud to do so. Others could do what they wished, but I would not be the break in that chain. The old gospel hymn (I realize the irony in calling it to mind in this connection) has it right: “Let The Circle Be Unbroken.”

On a summer Sunday, Donna and I were in the living room of her home in McLean, her parents having gone out, when I told her, in a choked-up voice and with tears welling in my eyes, that she and I had no future together. When I started to explain, she cut me off, screaming "I don't want to hear it," and insisted that I leave the house immediately. With as much dignity as I could, I stood up and, without looking back, let myself out of the house, leaving Donna, seething with rage, behind. Why was I so sure that I could not marry Donna? The points that Uncle Ernie had cited were powerful. Her mercurial and unpredictable temperament, so different from mine, was also a major reason for turning away from her. But the most compelling reason for saying "No" in Donna's living room that day was that marriage to her, instead of opening doors to the future, seemed to close those doors.

Others, in real life and fiction, have been hesitant to enter into the marriage bond for the same reason: "*The whole thing lacks the ambition—it fails to feed that conception of himself that's been driving him all his life.*"<sup>234</sup>

I was certain that my exit from Donna's house marked the end of the affair and certain, too, that I had seen her for the last time, but a few days afterwards she called me again as if nothing had passed between us. Flat-out addicted to each other, for all the wrong reasons, we picked up right where we had left off, as if we were a couple remarrying after a bitter divorce.

It didn't work; too much had passed between us. When you are in the throes of an unhealthy addiction, you have to end your dependency abruptly, "cold turkey," as they say, and that was what Donna and I had to do. Finally, painfully but firmly, we parted for good. Her last words to me, delivered over the telephone in a flat emotionless monotone, were "Well, Danny, have a good life." I've had some rough patches along the way, Donna, but yes, I have had a good life. And Donna, wherever you are, I earnestly hope that you have had a good life, too.

Our paths crossed, wordlessly, once more. Shortly after my new bride, Ruthie, and I returned from our honeymoon, we were looking at furniture on the ninth floor of Macy's Herald Square store in New York. There, scarcely twenty feet away, was Donna, a young man at her side. Our eyes met. After the first shock of recognition, it seemed to me as if she were in the throes of overwhelming emotion. Was there longing or anger in her eyes? Or

was it both? I couldn't tell. More likely, it was a warning sign: "Stay away from me, don't ruin it for me." Perhaps I had the same look in my eyes. Had we been alone, we might have stopped and exchanged banal chitchat, inevitably calling to mind for both of us the fleeting pleasures and enduring pain of our two years together. As we were not alone, we spared ourselves and each other the greetings that left more unsaid than said, the irrelevant and painful introductions of the "other" and the meaningless leave-taking. Instead, we passed soundlessly, "ships in the night." Our looks conveyed everything. Words were superfluous.

More than fifty years have passed since then, but I still carry in my mind's eye a clear picture of Donna as she was then, at 18. I have no photographs of her because she refused to let me take them. Perhaps she felt that she was not photogenic. Or, like certain primitives, she may have felt that taking a photograph of her was akin to stealing her soul. Most likely, she wanted to guard against the possibility that, if we were not to stay together, her photograph would appear in that pictorial gallery of mine captioned "Ex-Girlfriends."

Among the young women whom I dated after that, until I met Ruthie, I had strong bonds of affection only with Kathy. She was from Goshen, Indiana, a student at the Oberlin College Conservatory, where she was receiving violin instruction. We met in 1963 when she was a summer student at George Washington. Of medium height, Kathy was thin, almost anorexic in appearance, with dark brown hair and large brown eyes that gave her a dreamy expression. Most of the time, she had on her face a half-smile, like the Mona Lisa's. She struggled with narcolepsy, causing her to nod off at the most inconvenient times.

Music was Kathy's consuming passion, her life. During the summer that we dated, we went every Sunday evening to the open air concerts given by the U.S. Marine Corps band at the Watergate near the Lincoln Memorial. The Watergate itself refers to the concrete steps leading from the Lincoln Memorial grounds down to the Potomac River. They were built to be used as a ceremonial waterside entry to the Mall; you can still see them as you drive down Rock Creek Parkway toward the Mall.

On a barge moored at the foot of the Watergate steps, the National Park Service had erected an elaborate bandshell. Kathy and I were among the crowd of people sitting on the Watergate

steps under the starlit summer sky. Other spectators paddled their canoes and kayaks close by to hear the music. Within the arching bandshell, the Marine Corps musicians, resplendent in their red, royal blue and gold dress uniforms, played the standard military band repertory: Sousa marches, arrangements for brass of Stephen Foster and other American songs and other staples of the Summer Pops genre. The evening always ended with Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever," the audience clapping in time to the final measures that follow the famous piccolo solo.

At the end of the summer, Kathy returned to Oberlin College for the fall semester. On a weekend visit to Ohio, I attended with her what was perhaps the most memorable concert of my life, at Cleveland's Severance Hall. Of such occasions, when one hears a sublime piece of music being played, Rollo May has written:

*Again we find ourselves repeating on hearing a Mozart sonata, 'If I live to be a thousand years, I will never forget this moment.' Such moments are beyond time.*<sup>235</sup>

So they were for me, when, from student seats high up in the second balcony, Kathy and I heard George Szell lead the Cleveland Symphony in a performance of a Gabrielli trumpet concerto. By twos and threes, the trumpet section of the orchestra was dispersed throughout the hall, a pair of them standing not far from us. In playing that concerto, the brass "spoke" and responded in baroque lyricism to each other and to the rest of the orchestra, which remained on stage. It was utterly exalting.

Afterwards, Kathy admitted that she had been sexually excited on hearing that music. I, too, had been stimulated by that music, although I would not have identified my feelings as sexual. More recently, though, I have come to understand the connection between music and sexual arousal, whether one is listening to a Maria Callas aria, a solo cello, an expressive violin, or an entire orchestra. On hearing beautiful music, we often describe ourselves in the same terms that we use of sexual ecstasy. We speak of being "carried away," "transported" or "enraptured." Lord Byron, that most romantic of the Romantic poets, linked music and sexual love, speaking in his *Childe Harold* of music's "voluptuous swell."<sup>236</sup>

After that visit to Kathy at Oberlin College, she and I drifted apart. There was, however, to be one last communication between us. In mid-1964, after Ruthie and I were wed, I received "from out

of the blue” a letter from Kathy, asking what had become of me and, in so many words, inviting me to resume our relationship. I had to write her back and inform her that since we had last seen each other, I was now married. There was no response to that letter.

I can imagine, though, that, on reading that letter, Kathy had the same emotional response that I had on reading that "it's over" letter from Iris some twelve years earlier.

Hard work at Law School brought its rewards; I was not distracted from my studies by my tempestuous relations with Donna and other women. On completing my course work in winter 1962, I stood in the top ten percent of the class, had been associate editor of the law review and had been elected to the Order of the Coif, the law school academic achievement society. My professional life, with its myriad possibilities, lay before me.

## MARRIAGE, FIRST CAREER STEPS

In the printed program for the University's mid-year commencement ceremonies in February 1962, my name appears as a recipient of the J.D. (Juris Doctor) degree, but completion of my law school studies did not mark a turning point in my life, as college graduation had. I did not choose to attend the ceremonies, electing instead to receive my diploma in the mail. Nor did I change my residence on graduating from law school; I remained in the same house where I had lived for the past two years as a student. Finally, there was no change in my social life, either; I was still seeing Donna. The only difference was that now I could find work as a lawyer. The unresolved question was, how to use that degree?

Shortly before my graduation, the dean of the law school, Louis Harkey Mayo, called me into his office and invited me to join the law school faculty. I had not been entirely pleased with my performance as a “guest lecturer” in Professor McAvoy’s Personal Property class, but he must have spoken well of me to Dean Mayo. That may have explained why I was now in the Dean’s office, being sounded out as to my willingness to make a career out of teaching.

Although the offer came as a surprise, I had given much thought to my future, and in particular to a possible career as a law professor. Since a great-grandfather, a grandfather and both parents had been university professors, it would have been a natural progression for me to get onto the professorial track as well. As strongly inclined as I was to a teaching career, I had an even greater resistance to it, as when a sapling has started to grow in an undesired direction and one pulls it back in another. It was precisely because of that family tradition and my own inclination that I

rebelled, thinking to myself that I need not become a professor just because my forebears had done so, or because that was where my talents lay. I saw little utility in passing on to would-be lawyers what I knew in my field, nor in spending endless hours in the library stacks doing the research that would be needed for the law review articles and books that would burnish my academic credentials. I might also have had in the back of my mind that hoary saying of Colonial times: “Them as can, does; them as can’t, teaches.” To that axiom some have added, “Them as does, learns.” I wanted to be a doer, not an observer and commentator. I wanted to be engaged usefully in the daily maelstrom of human activity.

Financial considerations entered strongly into my thinking as well. Professors at that time did not have the abundant consulting opportunities that they do now; I would have had to rely on the limited salary that a starting assistant professor was then paid. But that was not the overriding concern; indeed, I never reached the point of asking Dean Mayo what the starting salary would be. It was those career considerations that were foremost in my mind. So, instead of saying, “Yes,” or even, “Give me a day to think about it,” I told Dean Mayo that I was not contemplating a career as a law school professor. He shook his head with regret, and I left the office knowing, even as I closed the door behind me, that I had, at least for the time being, closed the door on a career in academia.

The practice of law with a private firm likewise held no attraction for me. I had not the patience to put in the many years of drudgery required of young associates before they are considered for a partnership. Unfortunately, I had no other employment possibilities open to me when I graduated from law school, so I found myself in February 1962 the holder of a law degree with honors, but with no job in sight. Almost immediately, however, I learned that a member of the Law School faculty, Harold P. Green, was heading up a research project on atomic energy and had a place for me on the team. My responsibilities would be as copy editor, taking the material that others had written and shaping it into a readable text. To me, this was not a career-launching position in the law, but I accepted it for want of another, with far-reaching, indeed life-changing, consequences.

Professor Green had obtained a grant to study the extensive involvement of the Congressional Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, the JCAE, in every aspect of the nation’s atomic energy

program. It had been textbook political science doctrine, enshrined in our Constitution, that the role of the legislative branch was to make the laws and that of the executive branch to carry them out. To its critics, the JCAE appeared to be breaching the wall between law-making and law-execution. The Joint Committee had assumed the power to control minute details in the administration of the nation's atomic energy program, forcing the Atomic Energy Commission to do its bidding in the placement of new facilities and other such decisions. If that summer's research was different from my previous experience in labor law, from my research into justice in the Dakota Territory, or any other research that I had ever done before, it was equally fascinating on its own terms.

Harold Green had assembled an extraordinarily capable staff. His deputy, Alan Rosenberg, with a Ph.D. in political science, later joined the faculty at Rutgers University. Also on the staff were Lawrence Pearl, a Yale Law School graduate, later to become a fair housing expert at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Daniel Lewin, a darkly-handsome Harvard graduate, and the office manager, Penelope Ladd Wright.

Dan Lewin was among us but not with us. Throughout the summer his face was fixed in a taut grimace; he never smiled, never spoke except the minimum that needed to be said to carry out his assignments. He was evidently profoundly depressed, because I learned that, a few months after leaving that job, he committed suicide.

Penny Wright was the person on the project staff who was to mean the most to me in the months and years ahead. Through her connections, I gained a direction in life, the field of affordable housing, and that, in turn, brought me to Ruthie, my life's mate. Penny had just turned 40 when I met her. She was of medium height and athletic build, lively blue eyes and hair originally brunette that would be streaked over the years in various shades of blonde, silver and gold. Her voice, the spirited and cultured voice of the New England Anglican Protestant establishment, came naturally to her because she was a product of that establishment. She had grown up in the "deanery" of the Berkeley Divinity School on Sachem Street in New Haven, her father having been dean of the school. After graduating from Day-Prospect Hill School, she enrolled at Radcliffe College. When she married Tom Wright during the war, Penny dropped out of college and never graduated. It was ever a

source of frustration and resentment to her that, because of her lack of a college degree, she found herself limited in the jobs that were open to her.

When Tom Wright was mustered out of the Navy in 1945, he returned with his bride to Harvard, where he earned his Master's degree in Urban Design. Then they came back to his hometown, Washington, he to open his architectural practice, she to raise the family. Eventually, they would have three children, Peter, the oldest, born in 1946, Felicity, born in 1948, and Allegra, born in 1956. Even before the courts ordered the desegregation of the District of Columbia public schools in the mid-1950's, the Wrights, then living in the Dupont Circle area, were active in the pioneering efforts to bring together the students at the formerly all-white Adams School and those from the nearby all-black school, the Morgan School.

In that summer of 1962, Penny and I formed a close bond. I came to see her as my mentor and myself as her protégé. She included me in her social circle, inviting me to almost every cocktail party and soirée that she and Tom gave in their home at 4564 Indian Rock Terrace, N.W., just west of Foxhall Road. As many architects do, Tom had designed the house himself and had overseen its construction. Taking maximum advantage of its location, he had sited the house on a high bluff looking southeast toward the Potomac River and downtown Washington. On hot summer evenings I would sit with Penny and Tom on the flagstone terrace outside the dining room as we nursed our vodka-and-tonics and enjoyed the cooling breezes off the river. Winters, we stayed indoors, sitting around the raised hearth at the far end of the living room.

Because Tom Wright was active in the American Institute of Architects, he and Penny hosted many well-known architects of the day whom I was privileged to meet, among them the Bauhaus modernist Richard Neutra. Penny was the more politically active of the two. Through her connections, I met prominent Washingtonians such as Walter Washington, the first mayor of the Washington after it regained the right of limited self-government, and the Democratic National Committeewoman, Polly Shackleton.

When the Wrights went away on their annual winter vacations to St. Croix in the Virgin Islands, they were happy to have me house-sit for them and take care of their brown Labrador retriever, Charette. I was pleased, too, to be able to spend a week in the

luxury of their home, away from my rundown student quarters on G Street. Penny and Tom encouraged me to sleep in their bed, prepare my meals in their kitchen and open the house to my guests, as long as I assumed responsibility for them. Accepting that invitation, I hosted parties at their house while they were away, inviting law school classmates and others and feeling very much, for that one night at least, like the squire of the manse. One year, piqued with curiosity about the resort in St. Croix, Club Comanche, where Penny and Tom were “regulars,” I visited the place myself, and was royally treated there because of my friendship with them.

With the Wrights and their friends, I took part in a long-standing New Year’s Day tradition of theirs: a picnic on what they called Sunset Beach. This was a little patch of beach sand on the Maryland side of the Potomac River, reached by a trail from the C & O Canal towpath. In bitter cold, with freshly-fallen snow on the ground, we would build a fire on that narrow strand, first stomping down the snow to have a place to stack the logs and start the fire. A Minnesota novelist, veteran of winters much colder than those that we experience in the Washington area, has aptly written that

*when the land lies buried in the miseries of winter and the air hangs glassy and absolute over the world, that is when the merriest of all picnics happen. Anyone can tell you that these are the times you need a picnic most.*<sup>237</sup>

The Wrights organized these riverside picnics because, as the writer said, a picnic is most welcome in bracing winter cold. A New Year’s Day outing at the Potomac shore could be exhilarating and fun, and, invariably, it was. It only added to our pleasure to know that, when we returned from the picnic to the Wrights’ house, the fire would be blazing on the hearth and there would be hot buttered rum passed around to warm our innards.

I felt the deepest gratitude to both Penny and Tom, and still do today, for the doors that they opened to me, and for giving a measure of stability to what I thought of at the time as my rootless and direction-less life.

With the completion of the research project on the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy and the publication of its report, the staff disbanded. I moved immediately into another time-limited position, this one as law clerk to Judge Andrew M. Hood, the Chief Judge of what was then called the Municipal Court of Appeals, now the D. C. Court of Appeals.

Judge Hood was short and slight of build, with sharp steadily-focused eyes and a full head of silver-white hair combed straight back. A South Carolinian by birth, Judge Hood had attended Georgetown University Law School and had spent a lifetime practicing law in Washington without losing his courtly Carolinian drawl. He had been a bachelor until well into his 40's, then married and had one son.

His life revolved entirely around the law. He arose early and would take his breakfasts at a luncheonette downtown with other members of what was called, derogatorily, the 5th Street Bar. These were lawyers who occupied shabby offices in the old rowhouses on Fifth Street, across from the courts, amid the bail bondsmen's offices and those of the freelance court reporters. These lawyers were of a different fraternity from the elegant Ivy League attorneys in their navy blue pin-striped suits whose firms had offices on K Street and Connecticut Avenue. Instead of appearing in the federal courts and before the federal administrative agencies, these men, most of them solo practitioners, made their living hanging around the local courts, soliciting clients from among the defendants in the criminal courts, women who needed a divorce or tenants facing eviction.

I well remember one such "Fifth Street lawyer," a short rotund man of impressive girth with thick black hair slicked back from his forehead. He might have been described as "greasy," not just because of the pomade in his hair but because of his unctuous manner. In his practice he represented landlords throughout the District of Columbia. In fact, he so dominated the landlord-tenant court that he, not the judge, seemed to preside over it. He would stand at the judge's bench, even supporting himself against it, his papers on the railing in front of him. As the judge raced through the docket, the clerk calling the name of the case, the lawyer would shout "Judgment, your Honor," and the judge repeated "Judgment." These were all cases in which the attorney had requested judgments by default; on the failure of the defendant to appear, the court gave the attorney the relief he was seeking. If the defendant appeared with money at the last minute to pay his back rent, an enormous roll of bills appeared from the attorney's hip pocket. Right then and there, he took the cash proffered by the hapless defendant and gave the man his change in bills from that wad. Colorful lawyers such as this one are no longer seen in our

courtrooms. Judges today exercise stricter control over the proceedings and lawyers are seemingly intent on maintaining a more decorous image.

Judge Hood gave me great latitude in my work. After reading the briefs and hearing oral argument, he and his fellow judges met briefly to discuss the cases. He would assign the opinion-writing responsibility to one of the other two judges, often reserving the more important cases to himself. Then he would meet with me, tell me which of the cases he was responsible for and in broad terms outline his position on each of them. It was left to me to write the draft opinion for him. Once I learned to think and write his way, he often accepted my draft as his opinion, with only minor changes.

Early on in my service as law clerk, Judge Hood explained to me that his court heard and decided appeals in the everyday cases that are the bread-and-butter of the general practice of law—divorces, petty crimes, contract disputes, automobile accidents and the like. The object was not to write learned opinions which would be fodder for law review articles and newspaper editorials. These were the province of the Supreme Court and the federal appellate courts. Our objective, he said, was to write opinions easily understandable to the attorneys involved and their clients and, secondarily, to the other members of the Bar. The facts and the law were to be presented in short, easy-to-read sentences, and the opinion was to lead the reader simply and directly from the facts and the law to the court's conclusion. I took those directions to heart in that job and in my subsequent career as well.

Judge Hood was not only a keen lawyer and a fair-minded judge; he was a man of admirable character. He could have augmented his salary as a judge by performing civil weddings, but had never done so. He firmly believed that couples who, for one reason or another, choose to marry in the courthouse and not in a church were not destined for an enduring marriage and he did not want to play a role in sanctioning their bond.

Feeling the financial pinch of earning only \$5,600 per year, I told Judge Hood that I was having a hard time making ends meet on that salary. His response: "You have to think of your salary as including the experience you are gaining as a law clerk," and refused to adjust my salary. I grumbled to myself that experience doesn't put food on the table or pay the rent. I suppose his answer could have been, "If you're not happy with this pay, find a better-paying

job elsewhere.” Many other recent law graduates would have been happy to be Judge Hood’s law clerk at even less than I was making.

The understanding between Judge Hood and me, as between judges and their law clerks generally, was that I would stay for twelve months. I had already overextended my stay at the court, having been there for 18 months, when I received an offer of employment as assistant counsel at C-E-I-R, Inc. in downtown Washington. The job would pay \$12,000 a year. I thought that a princely salary, more than double my earnings at the court.

C-E-I-R had been a non-profit organization, the Corporation for Economic and Industrial Research. On converting into a stock corporation, it took as its new name the initials of the former name. It was one of the pioneers in the use of mega-computers for large-scale number-crunching, providing its data-collection-and-analysis services to corporations, government agencies and academia. I had been hired by Elizabeth Freret, the general counsel, a large-framed woman then in her late 40’s with blonde shoulder-length hair, large blue eyes and lips made over with bright-red, almost-scarlet, lipstick. Almost every day, she wore a black bombazine dress, set off only by a brooch or a pearl necklace. She was all business, cool and reserved.

WHERE WAS I WHEN, Part III: When the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his famous “I Have A Dream” speech at the Lincoln Memorial on August 28, 1963, I was right there, standing under the shade trees near the Reflecting Pool, along with Ben, who was visiting me for the weekend. From my apartment in Foggy Bottom, he and I had joined the throng of thousands streaming toward the Memorial. They were mainly African-Americans, many of them wearing their dusty cotton-field overalls, carrying signs announcing their origins in places like Clarksville, Mississippi and Lowndes County, Georgia, all of them demanding equal opportunity in employment and equal rights for black people in the South. The dense crowd packed the front of the Memorial and stretched out on both sides of the Reflecting Pool almost halfway to the Washington Monument. The speakers who preceded Dr. King were received with polite applause. One of them, the Jewish representative on this interfaith dais, was Rabbi Joachim Prinz, that same rabbi who had been on the *S.S. DeGrasse* with us when we arrived in this

country twenty-six years earlier. When Dr. King, the last to speak, came to the rostrum, an expectant hush came over the audience. Then we began to warm to his ringing oratorical cadences. Every line of his speech was met with cheers and applause as Dr. King's voice grew louder and more insistent. Finally, the thousands who were present on that hot August afternoon released their pent-up fervor with a tremendous ovation as Dr. King concluded with his electrifying "I Have a Dream" peroration and his impassioned closing: "Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, we are free at last!" Ben and I knew even as we stood there that we were witnesses to a great moment in American history.

WHERE WAS I WHEN, Part IV: Just three months later, I was standing at the elevator bank at the C-E-I-R offices at One Farragut Square, waiting to catch an elevator down for lunch at about 1:15 in the afternoon, when the elevator doors opened and my co-workers stepped off the elevator, stunned, with tears in their eyes. When I asked what had happened, they told me that President Kennedy had been shot. It was November 22, 1963. At that time the news was that he had been gravely wounded and had been taken to Parkland Hospital in Dallas. Without a word to anyone, I left the building and headed straight for Penny Wright's house, so that we could all watch television together. I felt the need to be with my "nearest and dearest" on that dreadful day. To me and millions of others for whom the New Frontier was Camelot and who felt themselves to be part of it, that was truly "the day the music died."

Within a few months after my arrival at C-E-I-R, the pace of my work assignments began to slow. As I finished my tasks for Elizabeth Freret, I received no new ones. For hours, I sat at my desk thinking up work for myself but finding it difficult to get through the day. Finally, I went into Mrs. Freret's office and suggested that I could take on new assignments. She stared at me with those passionless cold blue eyes and said, "Oh, I've been meaning to tell you, I've hired someone else to do your job." Just like that. I was stunned. It turned out that, before hiring me, Mrs. Freret had interviewed for the same job a retired Army colonel who had many years of experience in government contracting. Soon after offering me the position, she had decided that she had made a

mistake in hiring me instead of him. So, within the space of a few minutes, I went from a job paying \$12,000 per year to joblessness, to unemployment benefits.

Before my abrupt firing from C-E-I-R, Penny Wright had called me, again taking on the role of Fortuna's agent as a destiny-changer. I knew that she was a member of the Washington Planning and Housing Association (WPHA), an organization of well-connected and influential Washingtonians who were interested in the planning and design of their city.

Through the WPHA, Penny had learned that the federal government had funds for what it called "demonstration grants." Today, the federal government has strict rules under which it dispenses such grants: it advertises the availability of such funds and seeks proposals from qualified applicants, then it convenes a meeting of experts in the field to evaluate the proposals and recommend the persons or organizations to receive the grants.

Not so in 1963. George Nesbit, head of the federal Housing and Home Finance Administration office that dispensed demonstration grants, wanted to set aside a portion of his grant budget for a citizen group that would demonstrate the efficacy of rebuilding inner-city properties. He preferred that the funding go to a Washington organization because of the city's visibility as the Nation's Capital and so that he could keep a close eye on how the funds were used. Nesbit approached WPHA and suggested that a nonprofit citizen organization be formed to apply for those funds. Penny called me and asked if I would be willing, without compensation, to prepare that grant application. Having so little work to do at C-E-I-R, I was more than happy to cooperate with Penny and her organization. That application marked my first exposure to the field of what was then called low- and moderate-income housing. More important, it led directly to the intersection of my life and that of the woman who was to become my wife.

After meeting with George Nesbit and members of the WPHA board, I set out to prepare the application. The applicant organization, to be called Citizens for Better Housing, Inc. (CBH), would demonstrate that locally-based nonprofit organizations could use federal funds to buy and rehabilitate dilapidated inner-city apartment buildings and give them new life. At least at the outset, there would be a staff of one, a "Participant-Observer." This would be someone who would be on the field, playing the game, carrying

out the responsibilities of the organization under the grant agreement, and at the same time watch the game from the sidelines, that is, prepare objective reports on it for submission to HHFA. The salary would be \$12,000.

I was drawn to participating in Citizens for Better Housing for the same reasons that drew me in the following forty years to every job that I held in the affordable housing field. To be sure, there was an element of altruism to it, the idea that, through my efforts, I would be helping those who needed, and couldn't afford, "a decent home and a suitable living environment," to use the language of the 1949 Housing Act. But I am no Mother Teresa, for whom service to others is an end in itself. An even stronger pleasure was the rush of adrenaline, the excitement of being part of the action, of making things happen, and then of seeing tangible evidence of success in the opening of a new building. In the course of my career, I turned down positions that did not offer that gratification.

Upon the launching of CBH in 1963, the first order of business was to recruit someone to fill that participant-observer position. In September of that year, while I was still at C-E-I-R, the telephone rang at my desk. The woman at the other end of the line introduced herself as Ruth Klau. She told me that she had graduated with a Masters Degree in Social Work from the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration the previous June, with a concentration in Community Organization. Two weeks earlier, she had arrived in Washington, joining her twin sister, Ellie, who was already here. Someone at the University had given her George Nesbit's name and telephone number as a possible resource in her job search. She called him as soon as she came to Washington. Having in mind the demonstration grant that he was planning to make to WPHA, Nesbit had suggested that there might be a job for her at that organization. He suggested that she call Steve Block, WPHA's executive director; Block in turn referred her to me.

Ruth came to my office at C-E-I-R for the interview, wearing a magenta-colored dress and a silk scarf knotted carefully at her throat. I was immediately impressed with her confident demeanor and drawn to her by her open and guileless face, her luminous blue eyes and her calm genteel voice. I thought, too, that she might be Jewish. Having only recently been forcefully reminded of the importance of *die Kontinuität* and, what was more, convinced of its importance in my own mind, that was not irrelevant to me. The

interview ended with my promise that she would hear from me. I was certain that I wanted to become better acquainted with this young woman, and not just as a possible office colleague. The next day, I called her at her apartment in Alexandria and came directly to the point: would she go to a concert with me at the Library of Congress? She said yes, and we did. Later, there would be a dinner date at the Federal Bar Association's dining room on H Street, just blocks from the Law School, I hoping that the elegance of the place, with its red leather seats and royal blue carpeting, would reflect well on me. As I recall, our third date was for dinner at the Bavarian Restaurant, then on 11<sup>th</sup> Street north of the Woodward & Lothrop department store. As our relationship deepened, we saw each other as much as time permitted.

In those early weeks, Ruthie and I opened ourselves to each other, as a man and a woman will when they first become interested in getting to know each other better. I told her my story, the story repeated in these pages, and did not hide from her my turbulent relationship with Donna. I learned from Ruthie of her growing-up years in Hartford, of summers at camp and at a cottage on the lake in Coventry, Connecticut, of her three years of high school at Weaver High in Hartford's North End and of her senior year at the Chapel Hill School in Waltham, Massachusetts. She and her twin sister, Eleanor (Ellie), had gone to Chapel Hill at their father's insistence, she said; he had been concerned that the grades they had received at Weaver would not be good enough to get them into a respectable college. The goal was accomplished: after a year at Chapel Hill, the girls were accepted at Russell Sage College in Troy, New York. Both had spent their college summers working at the State of Connecticut Welfare Department. Then, with college degrees in hand, the girls had separated for the first time, Ellie going to Boston University for her Master's studies in Social Work, Ruthie to the University of Chicago. There was to me something very reassuring in this family history, bespeaking a stability that seemed very different from the tumultuous trajectory of my life to that point.

For Thanksgiving 1963, Ruthie invited me to come to Hartford with her to have dinner with her family. She had grown up in Hartford's North End, on Cornwall Street, at that time a predominantly Jewish neighborhood. This would be my first encounter with Ruthie's parents, Joe and Sadie, and the rest of her

family: her brothers, Arnold and David, and their wives and children; her grandmother, Sylvia Palten, and great-uncle Nathan Katz, who lived two doors down on Cornwall Street; and her uncle Paul Palten and his wife Joy and their children.

We did not spend Thanksgiving morning in worship, as I had some years earlier with Iris in Charles City, Virginia. Instead, Ruthie's father took me for a drive, the two of us together in his car, out beyond the Hartford city limits and into nearby Bloomfield. At the time, I asked myself why this man was showing me these warehouses and industrial parks. I soon realized that the surroundings were irrelevant; the car ride, just the two of us, was his way of getting to know me. I could use the opportunity to form some impressions of him as well.

As we drove through the empty streets, Ruthie's father told me that Governor Robert A. Hurley, a Democrat, had originally appointed him in 1942 as a judge of the Court of Common Pleas. When Governor Hurley's term expired, the new governor, Wilbur Cross, a Republican, did not reappoint Joe Klau as a judge. He then practiced law with John Bailey, later to be chairman of the State Democratic Central Committee and still later, during the Kennedy era, Chairman of the Democratic National Committee. In 1962, he was again appointed to the bench. Governor Abraham Ribicoff, a Democrat, nominated him for a judgeship on the Superior Court, Connecticut's highest trial court, and the General Assembly confirmed the nomination.

I learned, too, of my future father-in-law's family origins in Bukhovina, part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire before World War I, later to become part of Romania. He himself had been born in 1902 on Norfolk Street on the Lower East Side of Manhattan and had come to Hartford with his parents at age 2. He had been a lifelong Zionist, starting as a member of the *Poale Zion* (Workers of Zion) at age 15, and had served a term as a national vice-president of the Zionist Organization of America.

When we returned from that getting-to-know-you interlude, it was time for the Thanksgiving dinner. Sitting down at the festive table with Ruthie's family did not feel at all strange, as it had those many years earlier with Iris's family in Charles City. I was on familiar turf, so to speak. Ruthie's family treated me with evident affection, opening their hearts to me.

Back in Washington, Ruthie and I grew ever closer. She had by this time moved to Cathedral Towers, a then newly-completed apartment building at the southeast corner of Connecticut Avenue and Cathedral Avenue. She shared the apartment with Jill Leeds, a classmate of hers at Russell Sage College. I too had moved, to an efficiency apartment at 940 25th Street N.W., just south of K Street.

One day, I had stayed home from work with a bad cold. In mid-afternoon, the doorbell rang, I opened the door, and Ruthie was standing there with a shopping bag, from which she pulled out a sandwich and a container of hot soup and hot tea, everything that you needed when you were miserable with some kind of respiratory infection. I was much moved by her thoughtfulness and with the realization that, "Wow! She really cares about me!"

By February 1964, we were enjoying each other's company almost every weekday evening and on weekends. On one such evening, Ruthie said to me, "Daniel, where is this going? We've been going together since September." This was her polite way of saying (the more polite of the two variants), "Fish or cut bait." I understood her impatience. She had a right to know if this was leading to marriage.

I went home and again gave some serious thought to my future. Was this the woman with whom I wanted to spend the rest of my life? It didn't take much agonizing to decide that yes, she was. Her physical attractiveness was what had first drawn me to her, even at that first meeting in my C-E-I-R office. In the months that we had been dating I had come to know her, as she had come to know me. I had seen that Ruthie was refined and had a strong sense of self-worth, without a trace of conceit or affectation. I noticed, too, her ability not only to get along with others but to empathize with them. Most important to me was her equable temperament and her positive outlook on life, which would offset my occasional bouts of moodiness and morbid introspection. I was sure that I cared deeply for her, loving her as I had not loved any other woman in my life. With her, I could be the man I wanted to be and expected to be. Life with her would be a confirmation of my past, a fulfillment of everything I had been preparing for, rather than a violent alteration of course. Having these thoughts, I cherished the thought of marrying this woman and of being her husband.

The very next day, in mid-February 1964, I went to Ruthie's apartment and, haltingly, stumbling over the words, asked her to

marry me. She quickly said yes. With great excitement, we immediately called our parents to let them know. There was joy on all sides, and joy in my heart as well.

Mother's feelings for Ruthie were expressed in a letter written April 18, 1964 to Evsey Rashba, her lawyer in Geneva, Switzerland. In that letter, Mother expressed her pleasure with the forthcoming wedding: "*We are all very happy over [Daniel's] marriage, and have already taken Ruth into our hearts, because she is so warm and intelligent.*"

Mother also wrote to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, to tell him of the upcoming marriage. In April 1964, the Rebbe responded:

*May G-d grant that the marriage take place in a happy and auspicious hour, and that you should have true Nachas [joy] from him and your other son, in good health and prosperity.*

The months of our engagement were filled with the excitement of wedding preparations. For Ruthie, they were busy months, as she had to make plans for the wedding day at long distance with her mother, who was on the scene in Hartford. That meant choosing the caterer, the band and the florist; making a trip to Bonwit Teller in New York to pick out the gown; and designing the invitations, all the while working at a very demanding job. I was involved only in posing with my fiancée for our engagement portrait at the Bachrach studio in Alexandria and in the selection of our china, silver and stemware pattern at the Harris & Co. china and crystal store on G Street. It seemed to me to augur well for the marriage that we agreed quickly in the selection of these patterns.

During that same period, changes occurred in our work-a-day lives. Even as my job at C-E-I-R came to an end, I decided that my search for someone to fill the "participant-observer" position for Citizens for Better Housing had also ended. I would take the job myself. I needed the work and was sure that I could handle its two disparate elements. Because I would continue to be jobless until Citizens for Better Housing signed its demonstration grant contract with HHFA and could begin to draw down federal funds under that contract, and having no other source of income, I signed on with the Shinberg brothers, Leon and Philip, to practice law in their offices in the Washington Building at 15th Street and New York Avenue N.W.

Ruthie in the meantime had obtained a secretarial position at the Democratic National Committee, then gearing up for the 1964 presidential campaign. Within a short time the leadership at the Committee, recognizing Ruthie's talents as an organizer, gave her the task of coordinating the hundreds of volunteers who would be needed at national headquarters for that campaign.

It was during my brief stay with Shinberg & Shinberg that Ruthie and I were married, on June 21, 1964. I had turned 30 three months earlier, Ruthie was 24. The wedding ceremony took place at the Emanuel Synagogue, a grand vaulted-ceiling landmark on Woodland Street in Hartford, later an African-American church. The congregation's rabbi, Simon Noveck, presided; the cantor, Arthur Koret, sang. Ellie was her sister's maid of honor. As best man, my brother escorted Mother down the aisle to her place at the side of the *chuppah*, the wedding canopy, across from Ruthie's parents. Mother's close friend, Reb Zalman Schachter, also took part in the wedding. Before the ceremony, he stood alongside Rabbi Noveck and the bride's father as I signed the *ketubah*, the marriage contract, in the rabbi's study, and Reb Zalman stood with us on the *bimah* during the ceremony.

It has become common these days for bride and groom to put their unique stamp on the wedding ceremony by inserting in the traditional text a reading of their own choosing, or a favorite poem or song. That was not the custom in 1964 when we were married; each of the participants performed his or her time-honored roles exactly as our Jewish tradition required. I did not go down the aisle to the *bimah*, as bridegrooms often do today; rather, I emerged from the wings with the rabbi and stood on the *bimah* with him, there to be joined by my bride. To my left, at the edge of the *chuppah*, stood Mother and Ben, my best man.

Perhaps, as she stood next to my brother under the wedding canopy, Mother's thoughts strayed back to that moment, thirty-two years earlier, when she, as a young bride, had stood next to her husband in Rabbi Freier's study, to be joined as man and wife. Perhaps she reflected, too, on how brief was the time that they had together as husband and wife, and maybe she spoke a silent prayer that we, Ruthie and I, might have many more years together than she had with her husband. Then, too, she must have felt an overarching joy at being on the *bimah* now, for the wedding of her

older son to a woman whom she could love and respect as a Jewish daughter-in-law.

The organist in the loft at the rear of the synagogue played Henry Purcell's "Trumpet Tune and Air" as Ruthie came down the aisle on her father's arm. Facing Rabbi Noveck under the *chuppah*, Ruthie and I recited our marriage vows. I placed on Ruthie's fourth finger a gold wedding ring, the same ring that my father had placed on my mother's ring-finger at their wedding three decades earlier. Then, "acting in accordance with the laws of Moses and under the authority granted by the State of Connecticut," the rabbi pronounced us husband and wife. The customary glass shattered under my heel. At the insistence of Ruthie's mother, we came down the aisle, now husband and wife, to a spirited piece of Jewish music. Sadie Klau had reminded us that this was, after all, a Jewish wedding. So, three months into my fourth decade, I began my new life as a married man.

The wedding reception was held in the spacious backyard behind the Klau family home. A large canvas tent had been set up to shelter the wedding party and the guests seated at the dinner tables underneath. The musicians hired for the occasion stood alongside the plywood panels that had been laid on the lawn for dancing.

The festivities began on a discordant note. As Ruthie was preparing to enter her bedroom to freshen up for the reception, Reb Zalman appeared at the top of the stairs. A large burly man, he seemed to fill the upstairs corridor as he tried to convince Ruthie and me to enter the bedroom and close the door behind us. Under Orthodox Jewish *halachah* (law), an unmarried man and woman may not remain in a room without a chaperone. Once they are wed, however, it is traditional for the couple to observe the custom of *Yichud* (seclusion); at the conclusion of the ceremony, they retire behind closed doors for twenty minutes of privacy, with two witnesses standing guard outside. These moments of privacy, under Jewish law, seal the marriage. Afterwards, neither spouse can seek an annulment on the grounds that the marriage had not been consummated. Ruthie was not acquainted with this tradition, nor was I. This was her day, and it would go exactly as she had planned it. That was her prerogative. After more pressure from Reb Zalman, stoutly resisted by Ruthie, he abandoned his efforts to impose *Halachah* on us and retreated downstairs.<sup>238</sup>

Our wedding reception was also memorable because of the weather. June 21, 1964 was a hot humid day, the temperature hovering in the high 80's. Under that heavy canvas tent, it was even hotter, more confining, more uncomfortable. The bride and groom, wedding party and guests, wilted in the heat.. Nevertheless, we put our discomfort aside and made the most of this happy day. Ben, as best man, toasted the newlyweds. Under the maples on the makeshift dance floor, Ruthie and I danced our first dance as husband and wife to the then-popular waltz, "Fascination."

At the close of the reception, we changed into our going-away clothes, Ruthie putting on a tailored suit, navy-blue cloche hat and white gloves. After ducking through the traditional rice shower, we drove away in Ruthie's blue Nash Rambler to the Hotel Americana in downtown Hartford, there to spend our wedding night. Then it was on to the Orleans Inn on Cape Cod for a week-long honeymoon before we returned as newlyweds to Washington to resume our work-a-day responsibilities.

This growing-up story begins with one wedding, that of my parents in 1932, and ends with another, Ruthie's and mine, the one in Berlin, Germany, the other in Hartford, Connecticut. The two ceremonies spanned two continents and three decades, years marked dramatically by the tumult and turmoil of war and near-wars, by flight, disease, upheaval and untimely death, none of them predictable to those who stood in Rabbi Freier's study in October 1932.

Five decades have passed since the second of these weddings. Fundamentally, Ruthie and I remain the woman and man who stood side by side under the *chuppah* on that day in 1964, and that is a good thing. In other, more superficial ways, we have changed over the years, changes brought on by advancing years and by the changes in the world around us. The passing years have brought their share of pleasures and disappointment, of ongoing tension between ambition and accomplishment on the one hand and lowered expectation, of acceptance of things as they are, on the other. Arching over all is the unending desire to extract every drop of sweetness from life while continuing to attend conscientiously to its ongoing responsibilities to ourselves, to our family and loved ones, and to our community.

My parents' wedding, in 1932, marked the onset of years of turmoil, the opening scene in a play that ended tragically only seven

years later. For Ruthie and me, thankfully, it was otherwise: our wedding represented the beginning of a productive life, marked by the birth of children, of bar mitzvahs and weddings, the birth of grandchildren, and by satisfying careers. Marriage, family and friends have brought me the tranquility that was missing from my life as a young man. Our children and grandchildren have given us unending pleasure as we have watched them grow into responsible adults. They have amply rewarded the efforts we made to give them a loving and durable home.

I think often of the turns of fate that brought me to this point, of the decisions that my parents made in their best interest and ours, and of the decisions that I made as a young man, first on my own and then jointly with Ruthie after our marriage. In a more tranquil world, or if my parents had made other choices, I might have grown up, if I had lived to adulthood, as a German, a Spaniard or as an Israeli, speaking the languages of those countries. As culture so strongly affects personality, I would undoubtedly have become a very different person from the man I am today. There is no disappointment, no regret, on that score. I am happy and proud to be an American, and thank God for the chain of events that brought me here. I am happy and content, too, to have come to this place in my life. My parents passed on to my brother and me the torch in the relay race that is the human condition, as they had received it from generations past and as Ruthie's parents had passed it on to her. We have kept the flame alive, although the race has not always been an easy one. A new team of runners has in turn received it from us, and stands ready to pass it on. The torch is in excellent hands.



## ENDNOTES

### Foreword

- 1 Then in the province of Silesia in the Kingdom of Prussia, now the town of
- 2 Olesnica, in Poland.
- 3 After World War II, Breslau became part of Poland and was renamed Wroclaw.
- 4 A Jewish leader of the time, David Friedländer, had urged young German Jews
- 5 to volunteer for Army service: "Hand in hand with your fellow soldiers, you will
- 6 complete the great task; they will not deny you the title of brother, for you will
- 7 have earned it." Quoted in Amos Elon, *The Pity of It All: A History of the Jews in*
- 8 *Germany, 1743-1933* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2002).
- 9 George L. Mosse, "Jewish Emancipation: Between *Bildung* and Respectability,"
- 10 in Reinharz and Schatzberg, eds., *The Jewish Response to German Culture: From the*
- 11 *Enlightenment to the Second World War* (Hanover, NH: New England University
- 12 Press, 1985).
- 13 See Stachniewski and Pacheco, eds, *Grace Abounding—with Other Spiritual*
- 14 *Autobiographies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
- 15 Craig Seligman, New York Times Book Review, August 1, 1999.
- 16 Lorraine Adams, "Almost Famous," Washington Monthly, April 2002.
- 17 Review in Washington Post Book World, March 24, 2002, of Lorna Sage. *Bad*
- 18 *Blood: A Memoir* (New York: William Morrow, 2002).
- 19 Wallace T. McKeehan. *Sons of DeWitt Colony, Texas* (College Station: Texas A &
- 20 M University Press, 2002), reprinted at
- 21 [www.tamu.edu/ccbn/dewitt/davisgwmem.htm](http://www.tamu.edu/ccbn/dewitt/davisgwmem.htm) (February 26, 2011).
- 22 Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *Confessions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- 23 In McKeehan, *supra*, note 9.
- 24 Larry McMurtry. *Walter Benjamin at the Dairy Queen: Reflections at Sixty and Beyond*
- 25 (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999).
- 26 In *All Rivers Run to the Sea*. (New York: Random House, 1995).
- 27 In Darnton, ed. *Writers on Writing: Collected Essays from The New York Times* (New
- 28 York: New York Times Publ. Co., 2002).
- 29 Letter to James Craik, March 25, 1784.
- 30 David Michaelis. *Schulz and Peanuts* (New York: Harper, 2007).
- 31 In his *Confessions*. See *supra*, note 10.
- 32 (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1966).
- 33 Thomas H. Cook. *The Chatham School Affair* (New York: Bantam Books, 1996).
- 34 *Madame Bovary: Patterns of Provincial Life* (New York: A. A. Knopf [Everyman's
- 35 Library], 1993).
- 36 *A Sort of Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1971).
- 37 The reader will not find in this memoir any references to "Mom" and "Dad" or
- 38 to "Grandma" and "Grandpa," because my brother and I learned early on to
- 39 refer to them, and address them, as "Father," "Mother," "Grandmother" and
- 40 "Grandfather," respectively. That we used these formal appellations signified our

respect for them; it had nothing to do with their desire to maintain a distance from us, or we from them.

- 23 Gabrielle (Tante Gabie), my father's sister, passed away in 2008, at age 92. The last surviving member of my father's generation was a cousin, Naomi Marcuse Locker, who lived in Israel. She died there in 2012, at age 101.

## Chapter 1 ■ Birth, Early Years

- 24 (1889-1969). At the time of my parents' wedding, Freier was the rabbi of Berlin's Rykestrasse Synagogue. His wife, Recha, became the better known of the two as one of the heroines of the Holocaust. Along with Henrietta Szold, she established the Youth Aliyah, rescuing thousands of Jewish children from Nazi Germany and guiding them to safety in Palestine.
- 25 *Personalien der Hofkapelle unter Friedrich III – Musik und Oper am Kurbrandenburgisches Hof* (Personalities in the Court Chapel under Frederick the Great—Music and Opera at the Brandenburg Court) (Berlin, J. Bard, 1910).
- 26 [www.amis.org/publications/newsletter/2002/31.1-2002.pdf](http://www.amis.org/publications/newsletter/2002/31.1-2002.pdf) (February 25, 2011).
- 27 Berlin: Reimer/Vohsen, 1933. Published in English as *A World History of the Dance* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1937).
- 28 See [www.pickelhauben.net/Articles/Boer%20war.html](http://www.pickelhauben.net/Articles/Boer%20war.html) (December 25, 2011)
- 29 That house, directly across the street from Berlin's Tiergarten, is now the site of the Spanish Embassy.
- 30 For a fuller description of the unhealthy mother-daughter relationship which caused my mother to exclude her mother from the wedding, see Chapter 5.
- 31 When the Spanish Civil War erupted four years later, don Amerigo, a strong supporter of the Republic, would have faced grave personal danger had he remained in Spain. Escaping to the United States, he eventually joined the faculty at Princeton University. Father was later to seek his help in gaining a university appointment in the United States.
- 32 In 1999, I returned to Madrid, to Gaztambide 17, and stood in the doorway through which Father might have pushed me in my pram 65 years earlier. As the classical Greek playwright Sophocles says in *Oedipus Rex*, "To find out who you are, you must find out where you came from." That was one of my purposes for the trip to Spain.
- 33 In giving me the Hebrew name, "Yehuda," as my middle name, my parents honored my father's great-grandfather, Eduard Sachs, whose Hebrew name was also Yehuda.
- 34 The *Männerkindbet* refers to the ancient custom of the *couvade*, derived from the French *couver*, to hatch. When the woman's labor pains heralded the approach of childbirth, the baby's father took to his bed, tossing and groaning as if it were he who was in labor. In modern times, it is said that 80% of men experience psychosomatic symptoms at the time of childbirth. For the reasons behind the *couvade* in ancient times and today, see [www.paternityangel.com/Articles\\_zone/couvade](http://www.paternityangel.com/Articles_zone/couvade) (February 23, 2011).
- 35 David Gitlitz. *Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of the Crypto-Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996).
- 36 The text is from the election of citizenship document.
- 37 I am told that, since I never renounced my Spanish citizenship, I can still claim it under Spanish law.

## Chapter 2 ■ The Year of Flight

- 38 Rabbi Shlomo Riskin. *D'var Torah* [Torah interpretation], in Jerusalem Post, July 20, 2001.
- 39 See Genesis, 36:12, Exodus, 17:8-16, Numbers, 24:20, Deut. 25:17-19, Judges 5:14, 1 Kings 15:2-23.
- 40 Ruth Kluger. *Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered* (New York: Feminist Press, 2001).
- 41 The legal definition of the term is broader still. Various state laws define 'Holocaust victim' as any person who died or lost property as a result of discriminatory laws, policies or actions . . . between January 1, 1929 and December 31, 1945 in areas under Nazi occupation or influence. See, for example, New York Insurance Law, Article 27, and Connecticut General Statutes 12-701(36).
- 42 After the war, the West German government, recognizing that my parents had been deprived of an academic career in Germany by the Nazi takeover, paid over a small amount of restitution to my mother.
- 43 Harry Gannes and Theodore Repard. *Spain in Revolt* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1936).
- 44 John E. Crow. *Spain: The Root and the Branch*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
- 45 (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1969).
- 46 The psychiatrist Alfred Adler attached significance to his patients' earliest childhood memories. "He believed that there 'can be no accidental or indifferent memories, and the process of memory cannot be compared in any way to a photographic record.'" Rollo May, *The Cry for Myth* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1991), quoting Lewis Way, *Adler's Place in Psychology* (London: MacMillan, 1950). May goes on to say, *ibid*:

*The infant is fed three meals a day, is put to bed 365 times a year, but he forgets all these other things and remembers only this one. Thus the remembering has nothing whatever to do with the frequency of the event—indeed, we are most apt to forget the things we do most frequently, like getting up in the morning. The memory must possess some special significance, some important meaning for the little girl or boy.*

Evidently, these rejections, not by a parent or other authority figure but by our peers, leave a profound imprint on our psyches early on in our lives.

- 47 Another such ship removed Robert Graves, the expatriate English poet and novelist, and other British nationals from Spanish soil. In his autobiography, he recalled that:

*The one serious setback to my quiet life here [in Mallorca] came with the Spanish Civil War in 1936, when all British subjects were advised to leave by warship.*

*Goodbye to All That: An Autobiography* (New York: Bantam-Doubleday, 1987).

- 48 Scholem, ed. *The Correspondence of Gershom Scholem and Walter Benjamin* (New York: Schocken Books, 1989).
- 49 Leo Spitzer. *Hotel Bolivia: The Culture of Memory in a Refuge from Nazism* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1998).
- 50 This is the same ship on which Vladimir Nabokov, later to be my professor at Cornell, and his wife, Vera, would arrive in New York in May 1940. Launched in 1932, the Champlain had a short career in trans-Atlantic travel. As the ship returned to France from a trans-Atlantic voyage on June 17, 1940, she hit a mine, exploded and sank, with the loss of eleven lives.

- 51 Mayer had arrived in America only a few years earlier, carrying his most valuable possession, a portfolio of sequential photographs, the beginnings of photo-journalism. Within a few months, he had licensed the rights to those photos to Henry R. Luce, publisher of Time, Inc., who was planning to start a new magazine where the photographs would be primary, the text secondary. That magazine was to be called LIFE. Mayer went on to found the Black Star photo agency. It still exists today as one of the nation's largest photo-libraries and distributors for free-lance photographers. See [www.blackstar.com](http://www.blackstar.com) (February 23, 2011).
- 52 These were the years of the so-called Arab revolt, which began in April 1936 and ended in early 1939, anticipating by 65 years the hostilities of the 21st century Intifadas. 415 Jews were killed in the earlier conflict. [http://www.palestinefacts.org/pf\\_mandate\\_riots\\_1936-39.php](http://www.palestinefacts.org/pf_mandate_riots_1936-39.php) (February 23, 2011).
- 53 After the German Army garrison in Paris surrendered to the Free French forces on August 26, 1944, there was a parade of another sort down the Rue de Rivoli, as disarmed and bedraggled German soldiers, now prisoners of war, shuffled down the avenue to the train station on their way to internment camps.
- 54 Trude Marcuse's second husband.
- 55 Years later, Rabbi Prinz wrote that in Berlin during the Nazi years, Passover became  
*the great day of hope for delivery from our own Egypt. The whips which beat the naked bodies of Jewish slaves in Egypt were the very same that struck our bodies. . . We could now identify with the slaves for we ourselves were third-class citizens, and therefore slaves.*  
Quoted in "A Rabbi Under the Hitler Regime," Strauss and Grossmann, eds. In *Gegenwart im Rückblick* (Heidelberg: Lothar Stiehm Verlag, 1970).
- 56 Built in 1922-1923, in the Wilmersdorf section of Berlin, this synagogue was destroyed on Kristallnacht, November 9, 1938.
- 57 Strauss and Grossman, *op. cit.*
- 58 Leonard Baker. *Days of Sorrow and Pain: Leo Baeck and the Berlin Jews* (New York: Macmillan, 1978), quoted in Marion A. Kaplan. *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). In the first edition of her *Eichmann in Jerusalem, A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1966) Hannah Arendt referred to Rabbi Baeck snidely as the "Jewish Führer." For that she was expelled from the board of directors of the Leo Baeck Institute. The derogatory appellation was expunged from later editions.
- 59 As a Jewish leader, Rabbi Prinz worked closely with Albert Einstein, who said of him, "All rabbis are terrible, but Prinz is a little less terrible." Quoted in Anthony Heilbut, *Exiled in Paradise* (Berkeley, Univ. of California Press, 1983, 1997).
- 60 As he joined Dr. King and the throng on that day in singing "We Shall Overcome," his thoughts went back to the songs he and his family had sung at the Seder table during the Nazi regime. *Gegenwart im Rückblick, supra.*
- 61 Spitzer, *Hotel Bolivia, supra.*
- 62 Steven M. Lowenstein. *Frankfurt on the Hudson* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989).
- 63 At a time when non-Jewish firms were barred from doing business with Jews, the Nazis, to encourage the out-migration of German Jews, made an exception for moving firms. Jewish newspapers in Berlin were filled with advertisements from such firms, seeking the business of crating and shipping the émigrés'

furniture and possessions for the voyage out of Germany. See Baker, *Days of Sorrow and Pain*, *supra*.

64 *Frankfurt on the Hudson*, *supra*.

65 Joseph Roth (Michael Hoffman, tr.). *The Wandering Jew* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2001).

### Chapter 3 ■ The Family Reunited

66 As a three-year-old, I did not visit Grandmother, Ernie and Gabie on Ellis Island. However, a year or two later, Mother and I took the ferry to Ellis Island to see her maternal aunt and uncle, the Leuchtags, and their son, Hans Richard, who were detained there before being cleared for entry into the United States. I have a distinct recollection of the Great Hall, with rows upon rows of iron bedsteads painted white, a place you would be much relieved to get away from. Years later, when Ellis Island was re-opened as a National Historic Site, my wife and I took the ferry and stepped onto the island, as I had done some sixty years earlier. The Main Hall was restored faithfully to its former appearance. Missing, of course, were the hundreds of ragtag immigrants with their baggage, the sights, the sounds and the odors that those who passed through the facility encountered as their introduction to America. As Grandmother writes in her letter, an unfortunate few of the detainees never set foot in America; they were returned to their country of origin because they had criminal records, were politically suspect or were found have a communicable disease. At the outbreak of World War II, members of the German-American Bund, supporters of Nazism, were interned at Ellis Island before being deported back to Germany.

### Chapter 4 ■ The Loss of the Father

67 It was true of many of the refugee academics that their salaries were not paid by the institution at which they taught but by foundations such as the Rosenwald Foundation, which had as their mission the support of Jewish émigré scholars. Grandfather was one such scholar. In his twenty years of teaching in America, his salary was never paid with “hard money,” but always with this type of assistance.

68 There is scientific research to support this hypothesis. “Psychological stress can inhibit different aspects of the cellular immune response” (Glaser, 1996). Under stress conditions, latent viruses have an easier time resurging, since the body cannot defend itself as well (Brosschot et al, 1994). Gastrointestinal diseases are known to be greatly influenced by stress (Elliott and Eisdorfer, 1982).

69 Ruth, 1-15.

70 Exodus 23:1-3.

71 Father’s final scholarly endeavor, “*Fragmento de un estudio sobre la Biblia medieval romanceada*,” appeared posthumously in the journal, *Romance Philology*, November 1948 and February 1949. The editor, Yaakov Malkiel, wrote to Mother at the time that he was “delighted to have been in a position to save from oblivion some of the last pages of a young scholar for whom I have the greatest respect.”

72 One thinks of the memorable epigram from the 1970’s, attributed to Gloria Steinem: “A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle.”

73 *The Cry for Myth*, *supra*.

- 74 Irwin Edman, ed. *Marcus Aurelius and His Times* (Roslyn, NY: Walter J. Black, Inc. [for Classics Club], 1945).
- 75 Richard Ford. *Independence Day* (New York: A. A. Knopf [Vintage Books], 1996).
- 76 Literally, Sabbath-cap (in Hebrew, *kippah*; in Polish-Yiddish, *yarmulke*), worn by Jews as a sign of their submission to G-d.
- 77 That feeling grew stronger for me, as for most other Americans, with the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center.

## Chapter 5 ■ Mother

- 78 *The Pity of It All*, *supra*.
- 79 Edna Proctor, ed. *Life Thoughts Gathered from the Extemporaneous Discourses of Henry Ward Beecher* (Kila MT: Kessinger Publ. Co., 2003).
- 80 In *Genius: a Mosaic of One Hundred Exemplary Creative Minds*. (New York: Warner Books, 2002).
- 81 Quoted in its entirety at [www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/jewish-wills.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/jewish-wills.html) )
- 82 Did she make this statement solely to dramatize the extent of her spiritual rebirth? Ben and I have no recollection that, either at home or outside the home, Mother ever served or ate these *treffe* (unclean) foods.
- 83 Siegel and Strassfeld, eds. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publ. Society, 1973).
- 84 Song of Songs 5:2.

## Chapter 6 ■ Setting the Scene

- 85 *Frankfurt on the Hudson*, *supra*.
- 86 Reginald P. Bolton. *Washington Heights, Manhattan: Its Eventful Past*. Privately printed by the author, 1924.
- 87 *Ibid*.
- 88 *Ibid*.
- 89 *Ibid*.
- 90 *New York Times*, July 24, 1998.
- 91 *Ibid*.
- 92 The four-note sequence comes from the opening of Elektra's aria, her cry of pain: *Allein! Weh, ganz allein! Der Vater fort* [Alone! Alas, all alone! Father is gone.]
- 93 Joaquim Machado de Assis (John Gledson, tr.). *Dom Casmurro* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

## Chapter 7 ■ Within Those Walls

- 94 Knowing that the Red Cross inspectors never climbed the stairs to the second floor of the barracks, the Nazis, before the inspectors arrived, moved the sick and dying upstairs, so that the inspectors only saw the healthier inmates on the ground floor. *Days of Sorrow and Pain*, *supra*.
- 95 See <http://www.deathcamps.org/occupation/lublinghetto.html> (February 23, 2011).
- 96 Raoul Hilberg. *The Politics of Memory: Journey of a Holocaust Historian* (New York: Ivan R. Dee, 1996).

- 97 Nancy MacLean, "Rethinking the Second Wave," in *The Nation*, October 14,  
2002, reviewing Gerda Lerner, *Fireweed: A Political Autobiography* (Philadelphia:  
98 Temple University Press, 2002).  
Lerner, *ibid*.  
99 In *Exiled in Paradise*, *supra*.  
100 James McBride. *The Color of Water* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1996).  
101 Rollo May, *The Cry for Myth* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1991).  
102 *Ibid*.  
103 Larry McMurtry, *Walter Benjamin, etc.*, *supra*.  
104 Trillin, *Messages from My Father*, *supra*.  
105 Lowenstein, *Frankfurt on the Hudson*, *supra*.  
106 *Walter Benjamin, etc.*, *supra*.  
107 Edgar Hilsenrath. *Bronsky's Geständnis* (Munich: Langen-Muller Verlag, 1980),  
quoted in Susan Neiman. *Slow Fire: Jewish Notes from Berlin* (New York:  
Schocken Books, 1992).  
108 The philosopher–linguist Theodor Adorno made the point that in centuries past,  
people were proud of their names. The names they bore linked their bearers to  
their own past history. Those who took new names, Adorno contended, cut  
themselves off from that history. *Heilbut*, *supra*.  
109 May, *The Cry for Myth*, *supra*. May comments that "This Germany was the Icarus  
which soared to its too great height—and fell to its grisly death and destruction."  
110 Quoted in Heilbut, *Exiled in Paradise*, *supra*.  
111 However, Grandfather was not above using American popular culture as a  
resource when it suited his purpose to do so. For example, in his book on  
*Rhythm and Tempo: A Study in Music History* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1953), he  
ended his historical survey by citing the syncopated rhythms of Bing Crosby.  
Even then, one felt he was citing Crosby only to demonstrate his awareness of  
contemporary popular culture. Among his younger readers, the reference to  
Crosby only demonstrated his ignorance of the pop scene; after all, there were  
many American composers and performers who could have been more aptly  
cited for their rhythmic sense than Crosby.  
112 Even Albert Einstein, safely ensconced at Princeton University, said early in his  
exile that he expected to be "a bird of passage for the rest of his life."  
113 *Ibid*.  
114 Heilbut comments of the displaced scholars such as my grandfather that in their  
new positions as faculty at American colleges and universities "they were lords  
of new disciplines as well as inheritors of old ones. They found themselves to be  
role models, the classiest academics on campus." *Ibid*. That was certainly true  
of Grandfather.  
115 George Bridges, reviewing *Heilbut*, *supra*, 2d edition, in Rocky Mountain Review,  
1997. <http://rmmla.wsu.edu/ereview/53.2/-reviews/bridges.asp> (February 23,  
2011)  
116 The excerpt from the later books of the Bible (Judges, Kings, Chronicles and  
Prophets) that accompanies the Torah reading at each synagogue service.

## Chapter 8 ▪ The War Years

- 117 Philip Roth. *Sabbath's Theater* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1995).  
118 Elie Wiesel, speech in the White House East Room, April 12, 1999.

## Chapter 9 ■ Leisure Time I

- 119 Neil Simon, "Chicken Soup for the Soul Inspires a Play," *New York Times*, Arts and Theatre, November 11, 2001, page 7.
- 120 Robert Stone. *Damascus Gate* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998).
- 121 The custom is said to remind mourners of the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem. Others say that it is no more than a sign of respect for the deceased. For other possible explanations:  
<http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20070605190353AAEhkk>  
(February 25, 2011).
- 122 *Boswell's Life of Johnson* (Random House Modern Library, New York: Viking, 1979).
- 123 See [rsussman.org/family.html](http://rsussman.org/family.html) (March 3, 2011).
- 124 See [http://www.acina.org/acina/about\\_principles.aspx](http://www.acina.org/acina/about_principles.aspx) (March 3, 2011),  
<http://www.commentarymagazine.com/article/judaism-zionism> (March 3, 2011).
- 125 *Common Ground: A Turbulent Decade in the Lives of Three American Families* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986).
- 126 D. McWhorter. *Carry Me Home* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001).
- 127 The story of the wartime German-Jewish emigrants in Bolivia is told in Spitzer, *Hotel Bolivia*, *supra*.
- 128 Erickson, *op.cit.*, p.114
- 129 William E. Leuchtenburg, ed., *American Places: Encounters with History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
- 130 *Washington Post*, Book World, December 17, 2000.

## Chapter 10 ■ Leisure Time II

- 131 *Washington Post*, June 29, 2000.
- 132 Arthur Schlesinger. *A Life in the Twentieth Century: Innocent Beginnings, 1917-1950* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 2000).
- 133 *Tatler*, No. 147.
- 134 *Ibid*.
- 135 *Star Papers*, 1855.
- 136 Edmund Fuller (ed.). *A Thesaurus of Anecdotes* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1942).
- 137 Albert Jay Nock. *Memoirs of a Superfluous Man* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1943).
- 138 Philip Roth. *Patrimony: A True Story* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991).
- 139 "The King and I," 1951.
- 140 Kevin Merida, "Side Streets," *Washington Post*, August 2, 2001.
- 141 Written by Jim Beck and Lefty Frizzell.
- 142 The website created by Lefty's fans is at [www.myspace.com/leftyfrizzell1950](http://www.myspace.com/leftyfrizzell1950)  
(February 23, 2011).
- 143 Kinky's latest mystery novel, his nineteenth, is *Ten Little New Yorkers* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005). He has also written the invaluable *Guide to Texas Etiquette: Or How to Get to Heaven or Hell Without Going Through Dallas-Fort Worth* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2001).
- 144 For more on Kinky, see his website, <http://www.kinkyfriedman.com> (February 23, 2011).
- 145 (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994).

## Chapter 11 ▪ Hot Summer Days

- 146 McMurtry, *Walter Benjamin, etc., supra*.  
 147 I am told that the property acquired by Hans Maeder and his wife, part of which was operated as the Stockbridge School, has now been developed as a high-end residential condominium.  
 148 Words and music by Artie Resnick and Kenny Young.  
 149 Virginia Woolf. *A Sketch of the Past* (1938), excerpted in James McConkey (ed.). *The Anatomy of Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

## Chapter 12 ▪ Growing Up As An American Jew

- 150 See Verein Stiftung Scheunenviertel, ed. *Das Scheunenviertel: Spuren eines verlorenen Berlins* (Berlin: Haude & Spener, 1999); Eike Geisel (ed.). *Im Scheunenviertel* (Berlin: Severin & Siedler, 1981).  
 151 William Stern, "On the Fascination of Jewish Surnames," *Yearbook XIX* (London: Leo Baeck Institute, 1974). A lexicon-encyclopedia published in Leipzig in 1742 offered still another derivation, this one non-Jewish: "Sachs: a knife or short sword carried by Germans of old, from which the name 'Sachs' is supposedly derived."  
 152 Deut. 6:4: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is Our God, the Lord is One," the central prayer in Judaism that the rabbis recommend be said by a person on his deathbed. It was recited by Jewish martyrs as they faced death down through the centuries.  
 153 A similarly pejorative word with anti-Semitic overtones is the German word *mauscheln*, or, its noun form, *Mauschelei*. Having its origins in the name "Moses," it is defined as "shady wheeling and dealing," referring to what we call today the "fiddle" or the "hustle," the thin line between the legal and the illegal.  
 154 In my day, many Christians still believed that Jews had horns, just as Michelangelo had when he portrayed such protuberances as coming from Moses's head. The notion that Jews had horns stemmed from a mistranslation by St. Jerome of the Biblical passage referring to Moses as having a radiance emanating from his face when he descended from Mount Sinai bearing the Tablets of the Ten Commandments.  
 155 *Washington Post* Style, February 11, 2001.  
 156 See <http://ncronline.org/blogs/distinctly-catholic/benedict-jews> (March 4, 2011).  
 157 Lowenstein, *Frankfurt on the Hudson, supra*.  
 158 *Ibid*. In the early decades of the 19th century, rulers of German principalities insisted that if Jews were to gain acceptance as full-fledged citizens, their worship services had to be conducted in an orderly manner. Prayers were to be said in German instead of Hebrew, moving around during services was strictly forbidden, respectable dress was to be worn at all times, and Jewish men were forbidden to wear the *kittel*, the burial shroud, customarily worn on Yom Kippur. Reinhartz and Schatzberg, eds. *The Jewish Response to German Culture* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1985).  
 159 Lowenstein, *ibid*.  
 160 Trillin, *Messages from My Father, supra*.  
 161 The reference here is to the pre-1948 period. There would have been no prayer seeking Divine protection for the State of Israel until its establishment in May 1948.

- 162 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1907).  
 163 Book review, Washington Jewish Week, October 11, 2001, of Miriam Weinstein.  
*Yiddish: A Nation of Words* (Royalton, VT: Steerforth Press, 2001).  
 164 Quoted in Chana C. Schütz. “Max Liebermann as Jewish Painter: The Artist’s  
 Reception in His Time,” in Emily Bilski, ed. *Berlin Metropolis: Jews and the New  
 Culture, 1890-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).  
 165 Only years later, in the preparation of this book, did I learn from Father’s letters  
 that, as a boy of 3 in Paris, I had chanted a variant of those same words (see Ch.  
 2).  
 166 Trillin, *Messages from My Father*, *supra*.  
 167 Lowenstein, *Frankfurt on the Hudson*, *supra*.  
 168 Trillin, *Messages from My Father*, *supra*.  
 169 For more information, see  
[http://americanjewisharchives.org/journal/PDF/LVI/AJA\\_LVI\\_06.pdf](http://americanjewisharchives.org/journal/PDF/LVI/AJA_LVI_06.pdf)  
 (February 23, 2011).

### Chapter 13 ▪ Early School Experiences

- 170 It is a measure of the durability of these silly school jokes that, 55 years later,  
 granddaughter Talia, then age 7, tried the same joke on her grandfather.

### Chapter 14 ▪ The Walden School

- 171 T. Frank in Detre et al, “Roots of Art Therapy. Margaret Naumburg (1890-  
 1983) and Florence Cane (1882-1952)—A Family Portrait.” *Amer. J. of Art  
 Therapy* 22 (1983). See  
<http://www.webster.edu/~woolfm/naumburgcane.html> (February 23, 2011).  
 172 From Anthony Grafton. *Cardano’s Cosmos: The Worlds and Works of a Renaissance  
 Astrologer* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).  
 173 From Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “A Christmas Sermon for Peace,” in *The  
 Trumpet of Conscience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).  
 174 *The Principles of Psychology*, excerpted in James McConkey, ed., *supra*.  
 175 “As Time Goes By,” words and music by Herman Hupfeld, 1932.  
 176 Nobel Prize acceptance speech, Stockholm, Sweden, December 10, 1950.  
 177 Greene, *A Sort of Life*, *supra*.  
 178 Rollo May. *The Courage to Create* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1975).  
 179 For an appreciation of both these women, see  
<http://www.nysec.org/addresses/women.html>  
 See also [www.mockingbird.creighton.edu/new/morris.htm](http://www.mockingbird.creighton.edu/new/morris.htm) (February 23, 2011).  
 180 Philip Roth. *I Married A Communist* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1998).  
 181 See note 159, *supra*.  
 182 Walter Bernstein, review in *New York Times* Book Review, March 12, 2000,  
 quoting from Alvin Josephy. *A Walk Towards Oregon: A Memoir* (New York: A.  
 A. Knopf, 2000).  
 183 The exemplar is Frederick Vanderbilt Field. For contrasting views of Field, see  
[www.trussel.com/hf/crisis2.htm](http://www.trussel.com/hf/crisis2.htm) (February 25, 2011) and  
[www.biblebelievers.org.au/excerpts.htm](http://www.biblebelievers.org.au/excerpts.htm) (February 25, 2011).  
 184 See Chapter 4.  
 185 In a 1949 letter to Professor Otto Hahn, Albert Einstein wrote that, in their  
 support of the Nazi regime, “the conduct of the German intellectuals—seen as a  
 group—was no better than that of the mob.”

- 186 From Marquis W. Childs. *Sweden: The Middle Way* (New Haven: Yale  
University Press, 1936).

## Chapter 15 ▪ Walden Classmates

- 187 (1939), now at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri.  
188 Machado de Assis, *Dom Casmurro*, *supra*.

## Chapter 16 ▪ The Encampment for Citizenship—And After

- 189 Freedom House is best known today for its annual rankings of the world's most  
democratic and most oppressive regimes.  
190 Val-Kill was the first National Historic Site acquired by the National Park  
Service focusing on a Presidential First Lady rather than on the President  
himself. For the Val-kill story, see [http://www.nps.gov/archive/elro/what-is-  
vk/essays/vk-brief-history.htm](http://www.nps.gov/archive/elro/what-is-vk/essays/vk-brief-history.htm) (February 25, 2011).  
191 Van Ronk and Ellington, eds. Privately printed, 1959.  
192 Words and music by Sunny Clapp, 1951.  
193 Words and music by Carl Sigman and Duke Ellington, 1940.  
194 See <http://www.hmdb.org/Marker.asp?Marker=9284> (March 6, 2011).  
195 Matthew 17:20.  
196 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pz1WcqMQtmc> (October 8, 2013)  
197 Marilyn vos Savant in *Parade* Magazine, June 18, 2000.

## Chapter 17 ▪ "Bright College Years"

- 198 Named for Goldwin Smith, a member of the original Cornell faculty in 1868. He  
had been Regius Professor of History at Oxford University when he was  
recruited by Andrew D. White, first president of Cornell. Years later we learned  
that Goldwin Smith was one of the foremost British anti-Semites in the mid-  
nineteenth century. See Glenn Altschuler and Isaac Kramnick, "*Goldwin Smith:  
Anti-Semite?*," Cornell Alumni Magazine, March 3, 2009, citing Alan Mendelson,  
*Exiles from Nowhere: The Jews and the Canadian Elite* (Montreal: Robin Brass  
Studio, 2008).  
199 I was reminded of our short-lived dating relationship when I saw Renie, now  
Renie Hirsch, at our 50th Reunion. With her husband, she had emigrated to  
Israel, settling in Netanyahu, and had returned to Cornell for the Reunion.  
200 Clinton Rossiter. *Seedtime of the Republic: the Origin of the American Tradition of  
Political Liberty* (New York: Brace & Co. 1953).  
201 "No one who was at Cornell University in the spring of 1969 is ever likely to  
forget the guns-on-campus crisis that shocked the academic community and the  
nation. Bands of militant black students forcibly evicted visiting parents from  
Willard Straight Hall on the Cornell campus and seized control of it to back up  
their demands. Later, after the university's capitulation, the students emerged  
carrying rifles and shotguns, their leader wearing a bandoleer of shotgun  
ammunition. It was a picture that appeared on the covers of national magazines  
and was even reprinted overseas." Thomas Sowell, "The Day Cornell Died,"  
*The Weekly Standard*, May 3, 1999.  
202 Fredson Bowers, ed. *Lectures on Literature* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co.,  
1990).

- 203 Brian Boyd. *Vladimir Nabokov: The American Years* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).
- 204 *Ibid.*
- 205 Quoted in Heilbut, *Exiled in Paradise*, *supra*.
- 206 Quoting Frank Pittman. *Man Enough: Fathers, Sons and the Search for Masculinity*. (Boston: G. F. Putnam Sons, 1993). 121.
- 207 Erickson, *op cit.*, at 114.
- 208 Tom Perrotta. *Joe College* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001).

## Chapter 18 ▪ Entr'acte

- 209 When Sandra Day O'Connor, the first woman justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, graduated from Stanford University law school in 1952, law firms would hire her only as a legal secretary, although she had graduated third in her class.

## Chapter 19 ▪ Out of College, On My Own

- 210 *Washington Post* Sunday Magazine, June 4, 2000.
- 211 *Ibid.*

## Chapter 20 ▪ "You're In The Army Now!"

- 212 Maurice Sachs (Richard Howard, tr.). *Witches' Sabbath* (New York: Stein & Day, 1964).
- 213 *Ibid.*
- 214 Graves, *Goodbye to All That*, *supra*.
- 215 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1999).
- 216 Lyrics and music by Sam Cooke, 1961.
- 217 (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1963).
- 218 *Lords of Discipline* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1980).
- 219 When we visited the town 45 years later, on November 2, 2002, nothing had changed that would require me to revise that judgment. On a Saturday afternoon, when the commercial heart of the town should have been crowded with cars and pedestrians, it was almost deserted. Behind the Crazy Hotel, we found one establishment open, the retail outlet for the Famous Water Co., successor to the Crazy Water Co. I was pleased to see that the locals still imbibed the Famous Water, as several came in while we were there to exchange their empty containers for fresh water-filled jugs. The guestbook on the counter showed that, even today, the Famous Water Co. draws visitors from all over America and from many foreign countries.
- 220 On our return in November 2002 to what had been Camp Wolters, we found that the so-called "industrial park" was a motley collection of machine shops, farm equipment dealers and feed stores. The former post hospital, in its time the most substantial building on the post, had deteriorated into a roofless and windowless derelict. Similarly, the wood-frame building that housed the Public Information Office was a shambles. Only our cinder-block enlisted men's barracks remained in good condition. Repainted in a pleasing beige, it had been rehabilitated as affordable housing.
- 221 For further information on Jani and his post-Army career, see <http://disney.go.com/disneyinsider/history/legends/Robert-Jani>

- 222 For more on the "Galveston Jews," see  
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galveston\\_Movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galveston_Movement) (March 5, 2011) and  
[http://www.commentarymagazine.com/article/when-the-jews-came-to-](http://www.commentarymagazine.com/article/when-the-jews-came-to-galveston)  
[galveston](http://www.commentarymagazine.com/article/when-the-jews-came-to-galveston) (March 5, 2011).
- 223 To former American servicemen like me, the after-hours bars and brothels of Ciudad Acuña are only a memory; for many years, they have been off-limits to members of our armed forces.  
[http://medlibrary.org/medwiki/Ciudad\\_Acu%C3%B1a,\\_Coahuila](http://medlibrary.org/medwiki/Ciudad_Acu%C3%B1a,_Coahuila) (March 6, 2011).

## Chapter 21 ▪ Law School

- 224 Rollo May. *The Courage to Create* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1975).
- 225 Milton DeLugg and Willie Stein, 1950. Originally recorded by Stan Kenton Orchestra with vocals by the Nat (King) Cole Trio.
- 226 Leace can be heard on an April 13, 1971 recording made with Keith Jarrett at the piano. Atlantic SD 7221.
- 227 *Messages from My Father, supra*.
- 228 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2000).
- 229 May, *The Courage to Create, supra*.
- 230 Carolyn See, book review, *Washington Post* Style, May 11, 2002.
- 231 (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1955).
- 232 Ben Brantley review in *New York Times*, November 18, 2001 of "Everett Beekin," a play by Richard Greenberg.
- 233 May, *The Courage to Create, supra*
- 234 Roth, *The Human Stain, supra*.
- 235 Denis de Rougemont (Richard Howard, tr.). *Love Declared* (New York: Random House [Pantheon Books], 1963).
- 236 Recent physiological research has confirmed the connection. The areas of the brain known to be involved in pleasure, emotion and sexual arousal also became activated when research subjects, listening to classical music, experienced "chills of excitement."

## Chapter 22 ▪ Marriage, First Career Steps

- 237 Leif Enger. *Peace Like A River* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2001).
- 238 As founder first of P'nai Or and then of Aleph, the Alliance for Jewish Renewal, Rabbi Schächter, now Schachter-Shalomi, is considered one of the originators of the Jewish renewal movement. See [www.jewishrenewal.org](http://www.jewishrenewal.org) (February 23, 2011), [www.aleph.org](http://www.aleph.org) (February 25, 2011), and <http://transformationscenter.org/sageing/PosAging1.htm> (February 25, 2011).

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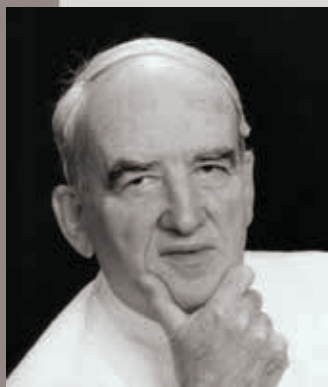
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